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MEMOIRS

OF

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON

COMEDIAN.

"JOYOUSEST OF ONCE EMBODIED SPIRITS."
Charles Lamb—"Shade of Elliston."

BY GEORGE RAYMOND, ESQ.

With Illustrations

BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

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INTRODUCTION.

HAD a mere statement of theatrical transactions in England, from about the commencement of the present century, with a biographical notice of some leading comedian, been the entire object of this publication, it could scarcely have expected any notice totally unmixed with reproof. The historical ground has been trodden by more than one diligent inquirer, and its remains examined by those whose taste and erudition have imparted fresh interest to the subject. The record of one of the most charming actors and valuable companions, Mr. John Bannister, has been handed from a source, which at once secured to it universal attention; while they, whose fancy might induce them to travel into the detail of theatrical matters, have had ample opportunity for the excursion, in the four agreeable volumes of Mathews' Memoirs. The autobiographies, also, of Mr. Frederick Reynolds,

and Mr. Thomas Dibdin, have contributed much to information of this nature, relative to the same era; whilst innumerable minor publications, all illustrative of similar facts, would indeed have withheld the present history, as one older than a twice-told tale, had not the author some unworked matter to unfold, some unguessed-at secrets to unravel, and some appropriate eccentricities to offer, which have long been reserved the property of the *Elliston* documents.

As in the Drama, it is technically said, there are some parts which positively "play themselves," into whatever hands they may be cast, so does the author of these Memoirs feel consolation that, the anecdotes of one whose life was full of adventure, demand but little more than simple narrative, and are of themselves sufficiently self-recommendatory, and require but slight additional aid.

Suited to the sparkling and adventurous days of Killigrew and Sidney, the name of Elliston would have glittered to no inconsiderable effect on the pages of Grammont, or have occupied a liberal space in the delightful records of Cibber. He, who would have been a feature in those days, must be striking in these; and though certain errors, to which it will be necessary occasionally to allude, were in the time of the latter Stuarts the fashion of the day, and less deserve forbearance in better times, yet it is hoped, sufficient eccentricities will be here offered

to amuse, without dwelling upon frailties which might offend.

But it is not less true, Elliston was born a century too late—his fancy and disposition belonged to a period, which would have ripened them to their fullest yielding. The same qualities, which lost him frequently the respect of the humble, would at that time have won him the admiration of the great; with the advantage of being chronicled as a wit, rather than remembered as a dupe. As a citizen of life, so must his reputation be content to suffer; but as an actor on the mimic scene, there was perhaps no period since the first dawn of comedy in England, in which he would not have been accomplished and pre-eminent; justifying all the attributes of the Drama, "Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis."

It has been said of Mrs. Mattocks, that had she been educated a nun, it would require no great penetration to perceive she was born for an actress. Had Elliston been cradled in Paraguay, it would have been equally clear, he must have found his way to Drury Lane.

For the fame of a *bel esprit* he was born too late—for that of an actor, just in time—when licentious manners began, indeed, to be met with the dignity of reproof, but when to "see a good comedy was to keep the best company; where the most brilliant things are said, and the most amusing happen."

Elliston was not one without "any relish of salvation"—he was better than an agreeable *vaurien*, for he was generous by deliberation rather than mere impulse; and if not of the liveliest wit, at least the most ready, and, like Wycherley, expired with a *bon mot* upon his lips.*

The highest order of biography, is a record of the man alone, whose virtues and sound acquirements would render his memory valuable and even necessary; but there is an inferior standard of this nature, which comes under the category of amusement, in which it is not so much the man alone who is recorded, as the great variety of passing events incidental to his time, and characteristic of the station in which he moved. On the permitted grounds that such a class of biography may be offered, (the end of which is only amusement,) the present attempt is presented to those who may labour under the embarrassment of leisure.

Yet is it to be regretted that the memoranda out of which the present Memoirs are erected, have missed that justice which at one time they had the promise

* When Elliston was in a dying state, at his house in Blackfriar's-road, his friend, Mr. Durrant, was near him, and being anxious his patient should take some medicine prescribed for him, said, "Come, come, Elliston, you must indeed swallow this. Take it, and you shall have a wine glass of weak brandy and water!" Elliston raised his eyes, and, with still a comic smile, replied, "Ah! you rogue—bribery and—*corruption*."

of receiving. A few years ago these notes passed into the hands of the late Mr. Theodore Hook, who was so much pleased with the material, that he willingly undertook to write the Life. His great talent in narrative, and peculiar faculty in relating adventure, could not have failed rendering the Memoirs of so stirring a subject as Robert William Elliston, highly delightful. But the lamented death of that gentleman, who at the time had not taken up the subject, occasioned a return of the papers to their owners, and they ultimately fell into the custody of the present author, who offers the attempt he has made, with the greatest diffidence on his own part, but not without trust in public liberality.

With one little anecdote Mr. Hook was especially pleased. In 1821, when Elliston was lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, the King wished to give some directions respecting his own box, and Elliston was desired, in consequence, to be in attendance at Carlton House. The manager was honoured by an interview; the King having expressed his desires on the subject, and Elliston being about to retire, his Majesty condescendingly expressed, in pointed terms, his wishes for the lessee's success in his arduous undertaking of management, when Elliston, by one of those strange impulses so peculiar to him, replied, "If *you*, Sir, are loyal, I must obtain the victory."

As a theatrical manager, the chief point of in-

terest in the career of Elliston, was his connexion with Drury Lane Theatre, of which he was lessee during seven years; and as some historical notice of that ground, on which the greatest actors we have on record, had erected their renown, may perhaps be interesting, the following account is offered, with certain incidental references.

The enfranchisement of the Drama, and the rise of true English comedy, were amongst the few valuable acquisitions derived from the "Restoration." By an ordinance of the Long Parliament, all stage plays* and interludes had been forbidden—the stages, seats, galleries, &c., pulled down, and all players, though calling themselves King's Servants, if convicted of acting, were punished as rogues—the money received by them was handed over to the poor, and every spectator was fined five shillings.

The sudden freedom, therefore, which had now been given to intellectual and social objects, had so charmed and elevated the people of England, that the graver question of political immunities, was for a time altogether unexamined; and in the exube-

* In the latter days of the reign of Elizabeth, there were seven theatres in London. "The Globe," Bankside; "The Curtain," Shoreditch; "The Pied Bull," St. John's Street; "The Fortune," White Cross Street;—another in Whitefriars —another in Blackfriars;—"The Cock Pit," Drury Lane.

rance of joy, the multitude appeared to invest the monarch with all those virtues, which could possibly irradiate the immediate descendant of a martyr. This melancholy delusion, however, is not the present subject. The period only is selected, as the commencement of a slight notice on the history of dramatic matters, relating to certain privileges granted, from time to time, for theatrical representations—more particularly the patents, &c. of *Drury Lane Theatre.*

Cibber, in his interesting "Apology," says, that Charles II. granted two patents—one to T. Killigrew, and the other to Sir W. Davenant, for forming two distinct companies of comedians. The first were called "The King's Servants," and acted at Drury Lane; the other, "The Duke's Company," in Dorset Garden. About ten of the King's Company were on the royal establishment, having each ten yards of scarlet cloth, with a proper quantity of lace allowed them for liveries.

Nature herself seemed to have formed Cibber for a coxcomb, and in such parts he was greatly distinguished on the stage. For though otherwise a sensible man and most assuredly a distinguished writer, yet his great ambition was to be looked on as a leader of fashion and a successful adventurer in the favours of the ladies. Congreve himself partook also of this frailty.

But to return to Drury Lane. The audiences

falling off in both companies, the two, by the king's advice, were united. This coalition took place in 1683. The profits were then divided into twenty shares—ten of which went to the proprietors and ten to the principal actors, in certain subdivisions. The shares of the patentees were promiscuously sold to money-making persons, called adventurers.

1694.—Christopher Rich, who had previously possessed himself of the Killigrew patent, now obtained an assignment of Davenant's, and consequently held both. Such was the state of things until his death.

1695.—Congreve, Betterton, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, obtained a licence from King William, to open a theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, —a separate licence, and independent of the patents. This was the parent of Covent Garden Theatre.

It was at this theatre (Lincoln's Inn Fields) that the extraordinary phenomenon of "the devil himself" took place, by the attestation of many good citizens and their wives. In the last scene of the representation of "Harlequin and Dr. Faustus" a violent storm arose, which carried away part of the roof of the building. Twelve Lincoln's Inn devils were at that moment having audience of *Dr. Mirabilis*, when a thirteenth!—no other than his real Satanic Majesty—appeared in a clap of thunder, and though he failed to carry away the doctor, yet

he appears to have been more successful with the money, for there was a sad deficiency in the accounts on the following morning, which of course could only be explained by the devil himself.

According to Cibber, Betterton must have been an actor of the highest excellence, a fact which the "Tatler" sufficiently corroborates. His line was first tragedy.

Mrs. Anne Barry was above the middle size, a fair complexion and of beautiful form; and she possessed a *gaieté de cœur* which captivated admiration, whilst it retained every claim to respect. Her principal characters were *Belvidera*, *Monimia*, *Desdemona*—and in comedy, *Rosalind*, *Mrs. Sullen*, *Mrs. Frail*, the *Widow Belmour*, &c. Mrs. Barry had been married three times.

Of that charming actress Mrs. Bracegirdle, Cibber relates, "It was a fashion amongst the gay and young to have a taste or *tendre* for Mrs. Bracegirdle. She inspired the best authors to write for her, and two of them, when they gave her a lover, in a play, seemed but to plead their own passions." She appears, however, to have had no great claim to beauty, though a striking brunette.

Of Congreve, it may be permitted, perhaps to quote the lines of Dryden:—

"In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise;
He moved the soul, but had not power to raise;
Great Jonson did by strength of judgment please,
Yet doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his ease:

In diff'ring talents, both adorned their age,
One for the study, t'other for the stage.
But both to Congreve justly shall submit,
One match'd in judgment, both o'ermatched in wit.
In him, all beauties of this age we see,
Etherege's courtship, Southern's purity,
The satire, wit, and strength, of manly Wycherly."

1704.—Betterton conveyed his interest to Vanbrugh.

1705.—Queen Anne granted Congreve and Vanbrugh a licence for a theatre in the Haymarket.

1706.—Vanbrugh opened his magnificent theatre in the Haymarket, in which, according to Cibber, "almost every proper quality and convenience of a good theatre had been sacrificed, to shew the spectator a vast, triumphal piece of architecture."

This house was afterwards taken by Swiney at 5*l.* per day. The Dorset Garden company joined this house in 1708, and in 1709 the Drury Lane company also made part with it.

1709.—Drury Lane Theatre was closed by the queen's command, Rich having refused to obey the Lord Chamberlain's order, and the licence was given to Collier. Aaron Hill, who was Collier's manager, wrote to him at Windsor, saying that the actors had rebelled — that a mob had broken into the theatre and had taken possession in the name of Rich, who had been displaced.

The queen now made void all former licences and privileges, and granted a new licence to William

Collier, Robert Wilks, T. Doggett, and C. Cibber, which was placed under the control of the Lord Chamberlain, and for the period of "our pleasure" only. No acting was to take place on Saturdays, these days being appointed to operas.

In April of this year "Love for Love" was acted at Drury Lane for the benefit of Betterton, which account, from the "Tatler," may be found interesting. "Those excellent players, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mr. Doggett, though not concerned in the house, acted on this occasion. There had not been known so great a concourse of persons of distinction as at that time. The stage itself was covered with gentlemen and ladies, and when the curtain was withdrawn, it discovered there a splendid audience. This unusual encouragement which was given to a play for the advantage of so great an actor, gave an undeniable proof that, the true relish for manly entertainments and rational pleasures was not wholly lost. All the parts were acted to perfection; the actors were careful of their carriage, and no one was guilty of the affectation to insert witticisms of his own, but a due respect was had to the audience for encouraging this accomplished player." A prologue, written by Congreve, was spoken by Mrs. Bracegirdle, and an epilogue by Rowe, delivered by Mrs. Barry. The former was never printed.

1712.—Booth applied to Lord Lansdowne to be included in the patent, which was conceded. Doggett took offence at this, and never after appeared on the theatre.

Booth was an excellent tragedian; was educated at Westminster, and distinguished himself at the University by his classical acquirements. He was of a middle stature; his form rather athletic, though by no means heavy; his deportment full of grace and his countenance of manly beauty. In acting, he was noble in design and happy in execution.

Though he had previously attained much professional success, it was not until he performed the part of *Cato* that he became so pre-eminently distinguished.

When Addison carried this celebrated tragedy to the green-room, he was of course expected to read it to the actors; but being a man of great diffidence, he requested Cibber to undertake the office, which he did so much to the satisfaction of the poet, that he begged the reader to perform the principal part, on representation. Cibber, however, knew his own *forte* too well to risk his reputation in a character so out of his line; he therefore preferred the part of *Syphax*, whilst Wilks took that of *Juba*. *Cato* still remaining undisposed of, it was considered that Booth would be fittest for the undertaking, but Wilks, fearing he would not accept a character of

so venerable an aspect, waited personally on Booth with the earnest entreaties of the whole company. Booth performed the part; and so great was his success, that it raised him at once to the first distinction in the art of acting. It was this success which induced the queen to grant him permission to be included in the licence, which, (as observed) so ruffled the temper of Doggett, that he retired altogether from the stage.

1716.—Sir Richard Steele's name was inserted in the licence in the place of Collier's, for life.

1719.—Steele's licence was revoked, in consequence of his opposition to the peerage bill in parliament. He was, however, restored on the following year to his authority in the theatre, and produced his comedy of "The Conscious Lovers," which he dedicated to the king, who rewarded him by a donation of £500. But his pecuniary difficulties increasing, he soon after sold his theatrical interest.

Wilks, Booth and Cibber were now managers of Drury Lane Theatre. A new play, entitled "The Spartan Dame," was produced, in which Cibber was to have had a part, but he was peremptorily silenced by the king, and the mutilated part was read on the night of representation.

The actors at Drury Lane Theatre at this time were—

Men.	*Women.*
Wilks	Oldfield
Booth	Porter
Cibber	Clive
Mills	Booth
Johnson	Thurmond
Miller	Theo. Cibber
Roberts	Heron
Williams	Horton
Bridgewater	&c. &c. &c.
Harper	
Theo. Cibber	
&c. &c. &c.	

Quin, Ryan, and Mrs. Younger were at this period at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where, in the spring of 1728, the celebrated "Beggar's Opera" was first produced.

1732.—Wilks died, and Highmore purchased his third. Wilks was a first-rate comedian, and born at Rathfarnham, near Dublin, in 1670. It was a favourite expression with him, that "he had ever dressed himself in the mirror of Monfort.*"

Chetwood, in his interesting theatrical history of his time, says "he was joined in the patent for Drury Lane, by Queen Anne, as a reward for his great merit. For more than twenty years the stage was in full perfection; their 'green-rooms' were free from improprieties of every kind,

* Monfort, a distinguished player, was basely murdered by Captain Hill, in Norfolk Street, Strand, December 1692. See trial of Lord Mohun. (State Trials, vol. 12.)

and might justly be compared to the most elegant drawing-rooms of the prime quality. No fops or coxcombs ever shewed their monkey tricks therein, but if they chanced to thrust among, were awed into respect. Every person of the first rank and taste of both sexes would often mix with the performers, without any stain on their honour or understanding; and indeed Mr. Wilks was so genteelly elegant in his fancy of dress for the stage, that he was often followed in his fashion, though his plainness of habit was remarkable."

Highmore having now purchased the interest, which Wilks had left in Drury Lane Theatre, a licence for twenty-one years was obtained, the first which had ever been granted for a stated period. This gentleman's fancy for theatrical speculations arose out of mere accident. Being a frequenter of "White's," he made a bet with Lord Limerick, that he would perform the part of *Lothario* at Drury Lane Theatre, which, in fact, took place in February, 1730; an experiment, for which Highmore had requisites somewhat similar to those of an "amateur of fashion," of a later day. He afterwards exhibited himself in other parts, and became so enamoured of dramatic affairs, that Booth, who was now desirous of retiring, applied to him to become a purchaser of his share also. Highmore bought half of this,

and in less than a twelvemonth he purchased Cibber's entire share, and thus became a holder of one moiety of Drury Lane Theatre.

Previous to this bargain and sale, Cibber had appointed his son Theophilus his *locum tenens*, in the management, and a more troublesome colleague poor Highmore could not have had, for within a fortnight from his investiture, Theophilus induced the principal actors to revolt, and open the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, which they did under his guidance, and without a licence. Highmore caused Harper, who was one of the revolters, to be taken up under the Vagrant Act, and he was committed by Sir T. Clarges, to Bridewell. Matters were finally made up, and the rebels returned to their allegiance. Harper was a good actor, and the original *Jobson*.

1737.—The Licensing Act was passed, on which occasion Lord Chesterfield made a celebrated speech in opposition to the measure, recorded in his Lordship's literary remains.

Sir Robert Walpole had been greatly irritated by theatrical lampoons, and as expediency and conscience were with him pretty much the same thing, a MS. farce, called the "Golden Rump," fraught with treason and sedition, was actually promoted under the contrivance of the friends of the administration, as a pretext for passing the above act.

The residences of the players, at about this period,

were in the immediate vicinity of the theatres. Quin, Booth, and Wilks, lived almost constantly in or about *Bow Street;* Cibber, in *Charles Street, Covent Garden;* Mrs. Pritchard, in *Craven Buildings, Drury Lane;* Billy Havard, in *Henrietta Street.* Mrs. Woffington was President of the weekly *Beef-Steak Club,* held in the green-room of Covent Garden Theatre; Mossop occupied lodgings at the end of *Drury Lane,* leading into the *Strand,* where he was found dead in his bed, with only fourpence-halfpenny in his pocket. Mossop had powers of conversation and superiority of manners which might have gained him honourable friendships, but the vanity of being run after by the profligate in high life, was his ruin—he was a professed gambler, and came to a gambler's end. The inferior players lodged in *Little Russell Street, Vinegar Yard, Martlett Court,* &c. "My home," says Macklin, "was generally *James Street,* whence I could be summoned by beat of drum, to attend rehearsals, saving thereby coach-hire; no inconsiderable part, let me tell you, of a player's annual expenses."

1747.—Lacy having become patentee, the fortunes of Drury Lane were reduced to a low and still-retiring ebb. His object was now to induce Garrick, who had been acting at Covent Garden, to join him, which was accordingly effected, and that great actor became a partner in the property.

Garrick took the stage management, and on the opening of his first season, in this capacity, Dr. Johnson supplied him with a memorable prologue. The plays of Shakspeare were now greatly restored.

Lacy had obtained his patent through the interest of the Duke of Grafton, whose notice he had attracted, by attending his Grace's hunting parties, riding with uncommon courage; and always being ready, just at the fit moment, with some little savoury refreshment for the Duke's gratification.

1753.—Drury Lane licence renewed for twenty-one years.

1761.—J. Rich, proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre, died in November, in his 70th year. Following up to the very last that peculiar department of dramatic art, namely, pantomime and spectacle, he had just produced a splendid representation of the coronation of George III., which Garrick, at Drury Lane, threw into burlesque.

In his badinage on the above "splendid exhibition," Garrick opened the back part of his stage, exposing the public street beyond the aperture, on the pavement of which, a real bonfire had been prepared, and around it half the ragamuffins of the parish capering, dancing, and huzzaing with all the confidence of well-trained actors. This was carried to such excess, that constables were compelled to interfere—an extempore piece of dramatic effect which

materially enriched the scene, and drew down thunders of applause.

In a few seasons subsequent to this, the state of Drury began to decline. Mrs. Cibber had just closed a career of well-merited success. Powell had revolted to Covent Garden Theatre, in which he had become joint patentee, and soon after died of malignant fever. Mrs. Pritchard was on the eve of retirement—so likewise was Mrs. Clive, whilst Havard was falling off into imbecility. The weighty responsibility lay on Garrick, Holland, and Mrs. Yates.

The rivalry of Garrick and Barry being brought to a close, a union of these two great actors took place, for the restoration of the drooping fortunes of Drury Lane. Mrs. Abington brought into co-operation her inimitable talents—by turns the representative of Pritchard and Clive, she became a powerful auxiliary. From this period to 1774, Drury Lane was highly in public favour. The plays of Shakspeare, Jonson, Otway, Rowe, Cibber, Steele, Addison, and Congreve, were in turn represented with flattering results, and the theatre exhibited a school of instruction as well as a temple of delight.

At the death of Lacy, 1773, the sole management devolved on Garrick.

1774.—Patent for 21 years renewed to Garrick.

1776.—Sheridan, Ford, and Linley, purchased

Garrick's share for 37,000*l.*, and commenced their season in September, with "Twelfth Night," and "Miss in her Teens," to a receipt of 269*l.*

When Garrick first became proprietor, the building was on a small scale, which, from time to time he enlarged and improved, and just before he sold his interest therein, he had built an entire new front on the site of the celebrated Rose Tavern, which stood under the very roof of the old edifice.

Of this *Rose Tavern* the very descriptive language of Mr. Robert Bell, in his "Town Life at the Restoration,"* is offered. "This house was nightly crowded by the play-going people, and seems to have been indiscriminately attended by both sexes. It was divided into chambers for private parties, and that of No. 3, as Farquhar intimates, was the favourite room. It was here that a promising young actor, Hildebrand Horden, was killed in an affray with Col. Burgess, and other persons, who were tried for his murder and acquitted. Cibber speaks highly of the talents of Horden, and says, that whilst he was lying in his shroud, several ladies in masks came to gaze upon his body."

This great improvement by Garrick was carried into effect by means of debentures, the first which had been created for such purposes, and with them the new proprietors were consequently saddled.

Sheridan produced his "School for Scandal," in

* Ainsworth's Magazine.

May, 1777, and notwithstanding the season realized 35,924*l.* 14*s.* 3*d.*, the real profits amounted to only 80*l.* 12*s.* 4*d.* The division as follows :—

Lacy.....	40	6	2
Ford.....	17	5	6
Linley	11	10	4
Sheridan ..	11	10	4
	80	12	4

"Garrick's Theatre," as it was called, was pulled down at the close of the season, 1791. From that time until the opening of the new house, 1794, the company acted at the Opera House, and on the nights appointed for Italian Opera, they played at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket.

The new building was opened, March, 1794, with an oratorio. It was constructed by Holland, and at Easter employed for regular dramatic representations. On the first night, "Macbeth," with "The Virgin Unmasked."

1795.—Sheridan renewed his licence for 21 years.

1806.—Sheridan assigned one-fourth of his share to Thomas Sheridan.

1809.—Feb. 23. Drury Lane Theatre was burnt down.

Sheridan immediately entered into an agreement with Lingham, for the purchase of the Lyceum, to carry on the performances, until the new Drury

Lane Theatre might be built; but in the meantime, by some misunderstanding, as Lingham stated, the theatre had been disposed of to Arnold. The actors, however, finished their season at the Lyceum.

"Their Majesties' servants" commenced the following season at the above theatre, the firm being T. Sheridan, S. Arnold, and Col. Greville. Greville remained a party for this year only.

After innumerable difficulties and vexations, ultimately surmounted by the perseverance of Whitbread, Drury Lane Theatre was rebuilt, and opened October, 1812, under the management of a committee of noblemen and gentlemen, wholly unacquainted with theatrical matters, and within seven years the debt amounted to about 90,000*l.*

The theatre was constructed by B. Wyatt. The entertainments of the first night were "Hamlet," and "The Devil to Pay." An opening address, written by Lord Byron, was spoken by Elliston. The night's receipt was 842*l.* 11*s.*

From this period, the history of Drury Lane Theatre will be interwoven with a future publication of the continued Memoirs of R. W. Elliston.

The closing of Drury Lane theatre on the 14th of June last may be considered an epoch in the era of the British stage.

That sister temple of the dramatic Muse, which scarcely thirty autumns since, was thrown open to

the glorious enchantment of *Macbeth*, under the presiding intelligence of Kemble, had been for some weeks silent as the tomb; and in June last, ever-memorable Drury, within whose walls had congregated the pride of England's genius—wits, poets and statesmen—where the "picked and chosen of the world" delighted to assemble, and whose idlest fancies were sought like flowers in May, by the less favoured classes, became a cenotaph of departed art.

Yet spite the general apathy in the public mind for many a past day, in respect of the Drama, the recent efforts of Mr. Macready to uphold the reeling column, had produced in some a responsive anxiety for his success. There were some few, who yet with earnest hopes followed the exertions of the only one apparently left, in whom to hope at all was reasonable. But to the suppliant "cause" itself, its antique glories and its imperishable essence, the generation at large was no longer to be steadily excited. Single handed its avenger had contended, if not successfully, at least, brilliantly; and this last struggle he had made, was graced in its failure by those honours and distinctions, which had hitherto been the portion only of a triumph.

Thus, by the above and other conspiring circumstances, the Drama may almost be said to be erased from the list of our intellectual stock—an altar on which the faith of all people, ancient or modern,

had been accustomed to make libation—a household divinity from the opening dawn of civilization, and occupying in maturer days, the proudest niche in the temples of polished nations. The Drama, through which veneration to the gods had been instructed—in whose garb the majesty of poetry had appeared most kingly—through which, the lesson of virtue had gone forth, as from an oracle—the love of soil and the gentler claims of home and kindred, had found the way to deepest sympathies—the Drama, which had ever taught all that was best and noblest to be learnt, was neglected as an obsolete and worthless appendage on the times, and a hindrance in the path of worldly traffic.

Even when cast under that memorable ban in the days of the Puritans, the Drama yet found refuge amongst many who fondly accounted its value, looking forward beyond that bleak and rugged season, fitted only to those stern qualities which the fortune of the times had called into action, and contemplating a day of intellectual sunshine into which it might again be elevated. At that period, though deprived of their theatre by a very interdiction of law, the taste and affection for the Drama was strikingly proved in many; for besides performances, sometimes accomplished by stealth, and sometimes acquired by bribery, under the very brow of Oliver, they tasted of the festive cup, and drank in the inspirations of the proscribed

spirit, within the walls of many nobles, and particularly the sheltering roof of Holland House.

English literature, in truth, was cradled in the Drama, and under it ripened into vigour and manhood. Had the temper of those times resembled the present, these young creations had never perhaps been brought to maturity. The now imperishable mind of Shakespeare, had in all probability never have come down to us, had Heming and Condell felt no sympathy for the worth of their illustrious brother. To contemplate the possibility of what might have been lost, by what has been preserved and perpetuated, is a reflection not unmingled with a sense of awe.

" Fastidiousness and hypocrisy," said the *Edinburgh Review*, many a day past, " have been growing for years, slowly but surely; and we have at last arrived at such a pitch, that there is hardly a line in the works of our old writers that is esteemed. We are more completely than any other nation, the victims of fashion. The despotism of dress or — in furniture, is not in itself very important, but it is a cruel grievance that it should interfere with and annihilate an entire department of our literature." These sentiments were expressed at a time when the grievance was considered at its height. But " slowly and surely" has it indeed since proceeded. Patronage and support to this intellectual commerce, might have been at that time no better than

empty names, but empty now are the warehouses themselves; the very doors of the chamber are closed, and the only sterile spot in the heart of London, is the site of the Temple of all the Muses.

Copy of the first Play Bill issued from Drury Lane Theatre:—

HIS MAJESTY'S COMPANY OF COMEDIANS,

AT THE

NEW THEATRE IN DRURY LANE.

This Day, being Thursday, April 8th, 1663,

Will be acted, a Comedy called

THE HVMOVROVS LIEVTENANT.

THE KING ..... Mr. Wintersell
DEMETRIVS ..... Mr. Hart
SELEVIVS ..... Mr. Bvrt
LEONTIVS ..... Major Mahon
LIEVTENANT ..... Mr. Clvn
CELIA ..... Mrs. Marshall.

The Play will begin at Three o'clock exactly.

MEMOIRS

ETC.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary notice and remarks—Elliston—His parentage and family—Education—St. Paul's school—Early indications of ability—Public schools—First attempt at acting—Tragedy at a pastry-cook's—Mathews—Further progress in acting — Unfortunate amateur — Letter from New South Wales—Elliston's frailty and remorse—Youthful dilemmas —Flight from home—Terrors of the runaway—Fellow-travellers—Gout and ophthalmia.

It is well to be armed with three reasons for an undertaking. A kind of prescriptive claim attaches to the number; and three reasons are here principally suggested in defence of the following pages :—

1. The versatile and desultory pursuits, apart from an active professional career, followed from time to time, by the subject of the present Memoirs.

2. The quality and extent of documents we have to deal with, in the composition of this history.

3. The constitution and natural temperament of the man himself.

In respect of the first—like a dealer in a country town, who is a cheesemonger on one side of his glazed door, and a haberdasher on the other, having a back parlour, in which he carries on the more solemn mystery of a bank, so verily, at more than one period of his life, have been the complications of the omnivalent Robert William Elliston; with this difference only, that in the place of the bank was the playhouse treasury, a place, unprofitably for him, too frequently so represented.

The Memoirs of actors are generally but the history of the theatre, and of the drama only so far as they themselves might have had business with any particular play; but the range of Robert William was of a far wider extent. Diversified in his employments, sudden in his operations, we find him flying off indeed at a "*Tangent*," to become the centre of some circulating library, or the vertex of some "Imperial Hotel." By the turn of his magic ring he will transport himself from place to place at the suggestion of a moment, and with the wand of harlequin erect ball-rooms, fill shops with merchandise, and string playhouses together like beads upon a thread.

But in all this whirl of matter, Elliston still followed his profession with ardour, and courted it with the sincerest attachment. His spiritual barometer rose with the pressure of his atmosphere, and what was "set fair" only with him, would have parched up the green fields of ordinary fortitude. Such

was the hey-day of his life—a season which might still have been protracted, would men but cultivate wisdom as they force wit, or take half the pains to retain they have exerted to acquire.

2. Respecting the quality and extent of the documents, &c., we feel with some confidence we can approach our readers. These consist, for the most part, of memoranda and original letters addressed to Mr. Elliston, extending over nearly the whole course of his life. The letters are numerous; several of them curious; and proceeding, as many of them do, from characters greatly eminent in their day, will so far constitute a feature in this work of unusual interest, and recommend the subject considerably beyond any labour of our own on its inquiry. No letter will find publication, of which we have not the original in our possession. They have been collected from time to time, by a gentleman connected, during many years, with Mr. Elliston himself, which, with many additional documents that passed into the hands of his executors, form an unbroken chain of biographic material. A few light incidental anecdotes, however, we have ventured to insert, on the sole authority of hearsay, but only where the question of their genuineness has appeared to be but of little moment.

Still will it be necessary to take a review of much theatrical matter with which the world has been made already acquainted; for the biography of our

present subject is essentially interwoven with it; and to recapitulate many events, the common property of cotemporary actors. Like *Mr. Hardcastle*, we must have affection with old houses, old furniture, old books, and not unfrequently, we can assure our readers, with old wine; but it will be with the view of broaching new fancies, and catching at some of those laughing spirits of recorded time, which till now may have eluded our vigilance.

3. The temperament of the man—

> "That heart of pleasure and that soul of whim."

Research has certainly not yet disclosed to us that corner of the earth, nor have those simple elements of society been yet discovered, which could have contained Robert William Elliston in a state of obscurity! Wherever his presiding star might have thrown him, there most assuredly a "star" himself, would he have been. A wild, charming, restless eccentric, whose elastic nature touched boundingly on the ground of order, and who from the data of rule took the project of his erratic course; a material well fitted to the loom of dramatic machinery, but for the sake of substantial respectability, a quality rather to be locked up with the embroidered suit, till the setting sun announced the hour of the rising for the mimic scene.

Elliston was never in repose—his lamp perpetually exhausting, though no illumination was necessary —the fire of his imagination constantly under the

blow-pipe, though no immediate work was passing through the furnace.

The manners of an actor can as little endure the light of day as the canvass of the playhouse itself, but Elliston ever mingled the conventions of the stage with the sober humanities of real life. This second nature, which he had so fondly contracted, was a sublime abstract of the mock heroic! His features dressed in a humorous solemnity, and a measured comicality pervading all his movements. To a natural love of eccentricity, the trick of his trade was ever clinging, so that in a great measure we might apply to him Goldsmith's sketch of Garrick himself—

> "On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting
> 'Twas only that when he was off he was acting;
> With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
> He turn'd and he varied full ten times a day."

"He carried with him," says the delightful Charles Lamb, "pit, boxes, and gallery, and set up his portable playhouse at the corner of streets." Elliston's theatrical life was displayed as vividly in the high roads, shops, and drawing-rooms, as on the scene itself; he had learnt, indeed, all the world was a stage, and he seemed resolved that no less should be his. He was, in fact, a perpetual showman of artificial manners, which with his perception of the humorous, and love of adventure, constituted him a Feature in the giddy round of life, whilst others were moving with

less splendour, but more steadily, in the orbit decorum.

Strange as it may appear, with all this masquerading, Elliston was still of a frank and open spirit. True, he delighted as much in carrying the actor, and even plots of plays, into the privacy of life, as in portraying the simplicity of nature on the stage, but he still desired it should be known and received as disguise. The quaint external he wished to be looked on as it really was—not as *himself*. His study was to draw attention by a perpetual impersonation of the grotesque, without sacrificing any claim he might have on the score of a generous and kind disposition.

Having had occasion, in these preliminary remarks, to say thus much respecting the constitution of Elliston's temperament, we are unavoidably led to some notice of him, which otherwise would have been premature, in the capacity of an actor. To the mere mention of general results we shall confine such observation, as the special notice of his public appearances will belong to the instances as they may arise in the course of these Memoirs.

It has sometimes been objected, says Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, in his review of Cibber's Apology, that the actor merely repeats the language and embodies the conceptions of the poet; but the allegation, though specious, is unfounded. The poet has, in fact, but little share in the highest

triumphs of the performer, for these arise from his own genius. They are accomplished by the magic of the eye, of the tone, of the action, and by those means which belong exclusively to the actor; and in corroboration of the learned critic, as cited, Cibber himself mentions an instance in respect of Dryden. "I have heard him," observes he, "give his first reading to the actors of his own play, in which, though it is true he delivered the plain sense, yet the whole was in so cold, so flat, and unaffecting a manner, that I am afraid of not being believed when I affirm it."

And unfortunately all this essence must vanish, as the actor himself passes to the grave, and because it is *essential.* It is the spirit of the moment, which with the moment expires. Still less can it exist in form or substance, on canvass or in marble, that posterity may prove by their own senses the truth of what they have been taught respecting the actor, by having the identical evidence before them. If this essential quality cannot be so condensed, as little can it be represented by words. It cannot be told to-morrow, like deeds of valour or of arms, by him who has witnessed it to-day. It exists but *at* the moment, and *for* the individual attester.

He who writes, therefore, concerning any actor, should have encountered the man and his art, face to face. The triumphs he achieves can pass through no medium; they must be made over the very feelings which record them. The means, therefore,

are comparatively limited, and those imperfect, for acquiring a just conception of the fine and delicate executions of a first-rate actor. The painter—the sculptor—have their great advantages, whose efforts triumph after them, in their first imperishable force. But to the poet is the greatest boon. All the avenues to fame are at once open to his art. His works are multiplied into ten thousand copies, and all are originals, but the painter and the sculptor give but one, which can only be witnessed by a few.

"Authors after their deaths," says Mr. Hazlitt, "live in their works, players only in the breath of common tradition. They die and leave the world no copy," and in a few years nothing is known of them, but that *they were.*

> "The actor only, shrinks from time's award;
> Feeble tradition is his mem'ry's guard;
> By whose faint meed his merit must abide,
> Unvouched by *proof*, to *substance* unallied;
> All perishable—like th' electric fire,
> But strike the frame, and, as they strike, expire!"

In person, Mr. Elliston was of the middle size, and elegantly proportioned; and whatever success he may have acquired as a tragedian, we may at once declare was in defiance of his face, which was the very Mirror of Comedy. His countenance was round and open, his features small, yet highly expressive; laughter lay cradled in his eye, and there was a muscular play of lip, so pregnant of meaning, as frequently to leave the words that followed but little to explain. His tones were strong, har-

monious, and varied; and a tremulous earnestness, on occasions which did not quite call for the impassioned, irresistibly impressive. He displayed the art of tenderness and soft persuasion more strikingly than any actor of his time, and of appropriating another's woe in accents of sympathy, that left the feelings of his auditors no choice but bondage.

The actor on record to whom in style and quality of art he appears more nearly to have approached than any other, was Monfort, a cotemporary of Cibber. The vigour and spirit which Elliston threw into the dialogue of comedy, his rich, oily *empressement* of manner, the pith with which he impregnated the business of the scene, and the earnestness he imparted to each syllable of point, correspond nearly with the description given by Cibber of him just mentióned; of whose accents, also, he declares,

> ——"Like flakes of feather'd snow,
> They melted as they fell."

In his very successful efforts, (and many they were,) Elliston attained that rare elevation of captivating equally, and at the identical moment, the ear, the eye, and the understanding.

Elliston was a distinguished performer of Tragedy, Comedy, Farce, Operetta, Pantomime, and Burlesque; and though not equal to himself in all, and inferior to the topping great, who in their own particular vein were transcendent, yet few ever accomplished with unequivocal applause, efforts so

variously combined.* "I can conceive nothing better," says Lord Byron, "than Elliston in gentleman's comedy, and in some parts of tragedy."

We find about him the mantle of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, for repeated years. Of *Octavian* and *Sir Edward Mortimer*, we shall have to make special notice hereafter. In *Sheva* and the *Three Singles*, we shall see him in successful competition with the favoured and original John Bannister. In *Vapid* and *Rover*, contending with Lewis; in *Wilding*, surpassing Palmer; and with the wide boundary of leading Comedy his undisputed estate.

Robert William Elliston was born on the 7th of April, 1774, in Orange Street, Bloomsbury, where his father, Robert Elliston, resided and carried on the mystery of a watchmaker.

Robert (the father) was the youngest son of a respectable farmer of Gedgrave, near Orford, on the Suffolk coast.

His *eldest* brother, William, was a member of St. John's College, Cambridge; he received his degree in 1754, with the distinction of fourth Wrangler, and was elected master of Sidney College in 1760.

* Foremost of the few, we must except *him* who could play *Abel Drugger* as well as *Lear*, *Bays* as *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* as the *Schoolboy*, and *Lord Chalkstone* as *Lusignan*.

His *elder* brother was in the navy, and had attained the rank of commander when he died. He shared, we are informed, in the glory of the action of August, 1759, at that time a lieutenant, when Admiral Boscawen defeated the French fleet off Gibraltar.

His sister (aunt to the subject of these Memoirs) was married to the Rev. Thomas Martyn, also of Sidney College, who succeeded the Rev. John Martyn in the professor's chair of botany, in 1761.

Professor Martyn was a man of great literary acquirements, whose labours and researches in the particular science he professed, justly won for him a high reputation.

Both these individuals, the Master and Professor, eminent by academic rewards, were men of kind, unaffected manners, and attached with parental regard to their nephew, whose honour and welfare was a subject in which they equally participated.

It may not be uninteresting to notice another very venerable member of the family stock—Robert Elliston, of Monk Illeigh, or Ely, in the county of Suffolk, and great-uncle to our subject. He had resided his whole life, like *Edward Ballard*, the last of the booksellers of Little Britain, in the same house in which he was born—namely, eighty-six years; a fine, hale, hearty old gentleman, whose death was at last the result of melancholy accident, —a severe fall. This event was rendered the more remarkable, as the old gentleman had been in the habit of saying, that accidental death alone would

balk him of a century. He left a widow, to whom he had been united for sixty years.

Robert, the watchmaker, appears to have been the least interesting personage in the whole group of which we have any knowledge, (except, indeed, in being the sire of our future hero.) But he was, moreover, a man of indolent habits and low pursuits, so that whatever skill he might at any time have acquired in the management of clocks, he sadly wanted a regulator to his own conduct. From extravagance he passed to niggardness, that *sera in fundo parsimonia*, displacing one vice by another. An early propensity to sottishness had rendered him morose and intractable; the fruits of which fell principally to the portion of his wife, as his son Robert was soon transferred under far better guardianship.

Dr. Elliston having for some time noticed with much anxiety the state of affairs in Orange Street, and remarked on various occasions early indications of quickness and intelligence in the youth, his nephew, whose manners and address were likewise greatly prepossessing, determined to take his education altogether into his own hands, an offer which it is not to be supposed met with any opposition on the part of the father, and certainly acknowledged with much gratitude by the boy himself.

In pursuance of this arrangement, young Elliston was in a short time entered at St. Paul's School, and his father removing about the same period to

Charles Street, Covent Garden, where he had taken a house on a handsomer scale than that in Orange Street, afforded his son more suitable means of domestic comfort; for during the school months he still lodged with his parents, his good uncle being on no account desirous of alienating any portion of filial respect from the breast of his pupil, and more particularly as his mother was an amiable and well-conditioned woman.

The holidays, however, our young gentleman passed with either his uncle Elliston or Martyn—generally the former; in winter at Cambridge, and during the summer, in his company on any excursion the Doctor might be making in the long vacation. The youth thus became so great a favourite at Sidney Lodge, that the master never parted with him on his return to St. Paul's without a secret wish he might be too late for the coach.

It was the intention of the Doctor to enter his nephew a member of his own college, with a view that he might take ultimately to the church. He perceived him daily to give further demonstrations of ability and intelligence, and amongst his humbler accomplishments, that of reading impressively and with discrimination, especially charmed his relative. On many occasions, but invariably on the Sunday evening, the Doctor would assemble his household to hear his nephew read some moral discourse of his selection,—Barrow, was the great book,—and the consciousness of excelling in this particular,

was perhaps not the least delight the young man experienced in these spiritual exercises.

It is a custom at our public schools, sanctioned, at best, perhaps, by time, to observe certain anniversaries by speeches delivered by the upper boys before their assembled friends.

At Westminster the plays of Terence are acted, and though objections have been raised on the moral question of unveiling to youth the deformities of the social body, (which, however late discovered, are yet too early,) the young men at Westminster do certainly enter into the spirit of their undertaking; but in most other public schools, this "speech day" is but a dull, monotonous, antiquated piece of business. Some classic oration, committed laboriously to memory, mistily understood, and mechanically recited, is the *coup d'essai* of the eventful year, and the intellectual treat to some three or four hundred well-dressed persons after a long and dusty journey.

Should a youth of better courage than his fellows attempt to violate the old convention of action or delivery on these occasions, or give any evidence of being really touched with the fancy of the poet, or the fire of the orator, the dangerous innovator is visited with ready correction; or, like poor Roderick Random, his fingers are tied up with a pulley, lest he should learn to write too good a hand. This rigid precaution we have heard defended on the plea of guarding against theatrical habits, but it is scarcely a question whether a total abolition of

so imperfect an affair would not be the better expedient.

It is, however, beyond all doubt, that the first time our young friend became animated with a sense of his own powers, on oratorical grounds, was on one of these anniversaries, when, to the confusion of the presiding master, Dr. Roberts, but the involuntary assent of the surrounding company, he dared to win some genuine tokens of applause, by mixing a little of the theatrical ingredient.

In 1790, being then the fourth boy in the school, young Elliston delivered an original oration—thesis, "*Nemo confidat nimium secundis*"—with so much energy and novelty of style, that his good uncle, completely losing sight of the venerable claims of dust and antiquity, and shaking the boy cordially by the hand, declared his nephew had not given him so much pleasure since he had first placed him at school.

It would be scarcely fair to visit upon this little incident the sin of that great change which soon passed over the spirit of the schoolboy's dream, but it was not long from this event that our young declaimer was first seized with a thirst for theatrical pursuits—a disease which is seldom taken mildly, but when once contracted, has no remedy but to run its course.

In the upper part of a pastry-cook's house, in the Strand, near Bedford Street, resided a Madame Cotterille, who conducted an "Evening Academy" on the first floor—a lady standing still higher in

the respect of numerous mothers of St. Martin's and St. Anne's.

It was here young Elliston passed many of his half-holidays, receiving Madame's instruction in the French language, an accomplishment which in those days was deemed below the dignity of public schools, which appeared to consider all knowledge under the sun centred in the rules of prosody. It was here, also, he first met the inimitable Charles Mathews, son of a bookseller of that neighbourhood, who had doubtless discovered equal satisfaction in attending the instruction of Madame Cotterille; a coincidence which eventually turned out greatly to their mutual congratulation, for, independently of their emulation in the tongue of Wanostrocht's grammar, far more extensive parts of speech were now opened to their ambition, under the same patronage.

Madame Cotterille, by way of improving her scholars in the French language, allowed them, once or twice in the year, to enact English plays,—a philological compromise very quietly assented to by her auditors, who were composed of the aunts, guardians, and sundry family obsoletes of her pupils. Young Elliston was now invaluable. Generously did he liquidate his debt to Wanostrocht by the funds of Otway; nor did he hesitate paying a still severer penalty, by undergoing a frequent flogging at St. Paul's, for a protracted rehearsal in the Strand.

In December of the same year, he and his co-

disciple Mathews made their first appearance before a delighted audience over the pastrycook's shop.

The play was the "Distressed Mother"—Elliston sustaining the part of *Pyrrhus*—Mathews, *Phœnix;* and we are bound to confess, "by the kind permission of Mr. Mathews" himself, that the hero of our Memoir was the undeniable hero of that night—a report which might otherwise have been deemed a *puff*, recollecting the place whence it proceeded. But such, indeed, was the result; the evening passing off with satisfaction unbounded as the applause, in which ices, jellies, queen-cakes, and raspberry tarts, by no means played an inconsiderable part.

Notwithstanding the delight which Dr. Elliston had expressed at his nephew's display on the "speech day" at St. Paul's, Robert was too conscious how deeply displeased he would have been, had he been aware of the proceedings near the corner of Bedford Street. He warily, therefore, kept him in total ignorance even of his admiration of the drama, making his mother his only confidante, whose affection was like that of most parents, seeing nothing in the whole world half so much entitled to admiration as her own child's frailties.

After some months, another *jam* took place at the pastrycook's, when the tragedy of the "Orphan" was represented to fresh raptures of the old party. Elliston on this occasion played *Chamont*, and his friend Mathews the part of the *Chaplain*. The

house was verily an oven. Robert William was now twice a hero, reaping in the contest " whole fields of laurel." Caressed by the elderly, and in special favour with the young, particularly of the other sex, this *enfant gaté* abandoned himself entirely to the flattering bondage he had so closely courted. All other pursuits were neglected, and nearly all other ties forgotten, in the vortex of this omnivorous passion. With the enraptured *Nell* he exclaimed, " I dreamt last night I went to heaven, and this is it!"

Elliston was now in the nightly habit of attending theatres, witnessing the best efforts of acting, and seldom missed an opportunity for making an appearance himself. His ambition by this time had grown too bulky for the first floor of the pastry-cook's; and though he ever recollected with gratitude the scenic glories he had there participated, and the softer dalliance he had perhaps wholly engrossed, yet was he naturally desirous of shewing his quality before a more enlightened auditory than the rusty relatives of Madame Cotterille's scholars.

He consequently took part in sundry private representations at the Lyceum Theatre, where he at once became the leading tragedian—the selections, the management, the first parts being conceded his equitable claim. *Young Norval* and *Pierre*, characters which he frequently repeated before some of

the leading wits of the town, placed him at the head of all unprofessional aspirants.

Our youthful adventurer now began to stand in awe of the very fame he had been so sedulously acquiring. These proceedings could neither be concealed from the Master of St. Paul's, nor the Master of Sidney, who fondly persuaded themselves a far different part had been the object of his constant study, and academic applause the only approbation he had coveted.

We will here beg indulgence for anticipating a trifling anecdote, which, in its chronologic order, might not carry with it the same interest. Upwards of forty years from the above events, (in 1830,) William, eldest son of our present inquiry, in writing from Hobart Town, whither he had proceeded some time before, with a view of settling as an agriculturist, observed, he had fallen in with an old acquaintance of his father, a Captain M——, celebrated in his day as a member of the Four-in-hand Club, and as one of the choice spirits of London's gay metropolis. Captain M——'s visit to this hemisphere had not been quite so voluntary as that of our correspondent, having originally been transported thither for the offence of bigamy; but fourteen years and change of diet having purged away all corruption, and both his wives being dead, he might really be said to have began the world anew in New South Wales; and this he did by what he

called "*single* blessedness"—namely, marrying a third wife, but *one* only at a time. He was, in fact, at this period filling a highly responsible office, and on far better terms with his own conscience than when he boasted the fellowship of the notorious Sir John Lade.

"Well I recollect," said he to William Elliston, "the many happy days your father and myself passed together when boys. He was at St. Paul's—I, at Westminster. How fond we were of acting, and what hair-breadth 'scapes we had in the project of our private theatricals! We used to quarrel tremendously about the 'leading business' until we settled it this way—I was to have the handsomest dress, whatever the character might be, and your father the choice of parts. We were in the habit, too, of reciting graver matter at Professor Martyn's, in Park Terrace. I remember distinctly your father—'Summum, Brute, nefas,' &c.," continued he, attempting an imitation of his old friend; "but my speech was from Milton—

> 'Must I then leave thee, Paradise—thus leave
> Thee, native soil—where I had hoped to spend
> Quiet?'—"

a quotation which doubtless did not strike him at the time, so ludicrously apt to his own fortunes —and deserts.

But to return. The resolution which young

Elliston had now positively taken of adopting the stage as a profession was not unattended by mental distress. He thought on the cruel disappointment he was laying up for his two best friends, his relatives at Cambridge; and the sense of ingratitude stung him to the quick. In his uncle, the Master of Sidney, he had enjoyed both the love and protection of a parent, without the natural claim. His debt was heavier than even a long course of diligence could expect wholly to satisfy, and yet he was about to repay him with the base coin of ingratitude.

At other moments, somewhat after the style of *Harry Dornton*, would he reason. "Is not classic lore my very object? Æschylus, Sophocles, Shakspeare, Jonson—they are a noble study—none but a scholar can have intercourse with these mighty spirits; none but a scholar and a gentleman can hope to embody their creations. The stage—'tis a niche for literature's stateliest form; the drama—'tis a mighty branch of knowledge—of ethics too. Now, would my uncle indeed think so sternly of my motive?"

In fond, fleeting sophistry, half sad, half joyous, thus would he cheer on his purpose, and feel something like reconciliation; but sober judgment never failing to resume its place, brought him invariably to his senses with shame, and all the first bitterness of self-reproach.

The youth's conduct now became like that of most persons under similar impressions. The holidays were anticipated with less anxiety and delight; his letters to Cambridge were brief and vague, and might have become equally rare, but his constant demands for money altogether prevented their falling under that imputation.

Circumstances now arrived at that dizzy pitch which demanded him to *act* in right earnest. As in certain "misfortunes" we have heard of, attendant on another sex, concealment was no longer possible, and the first bold step of our hero was finally resolved on.

As it is pretty generally admitted that dramatic interest is best secured by basing it in some charming act of indiscretion, and guarding the early steps of its scenic children from falling into tame respectability, lest, for instance, like *Miss Languish*, there might be danger of marriage with the dull consent of guardians at last; and as it is necessary that all your heroes who would recommend themselves hereafter, should run away in the first instance, and commence vagabond, that they may finish better with the gentleman, we are so far happy that truth warrants us in confessing, that no sooner had Master Robert determined one point than he resolved on the other, which was to quit his home clandestinely, and throw himself on a far wider theatre than had hitherto been his fortune to encounter.

He was not long in planning the direction of his flight. A boon acquaintance, who had boasted the distinction of frequently acting under the management of our adventurer at the Lyceum, and in whom Elliston had before found it convenient to repose some little matters of confidence, was at this time living at Bath, and was a friend, moreover, of Mr. Dimond, the theatrical manager in that city. Bath being also at a respectable distance from our hero's two objects of terror, London and Cambridge—or, in other words, Dr. Roberts and Dr. Elliston—he thought he could not do better than fix on it, both as his place of present refuge and future expectation.

It was in pursuance of this, that on a black, chilly morning, in the very early part of spring, 1791, light in baggage as the *Hon. Mr. Dowlas* himself, with but little in his pocket and still less in his stomach, Robert William slipped from the street-door of his father's house, punctually at half-past four by the paternal chronometer, and made the best of his way to the coach-office in Piccadilly.

In the year 1791, the English stage-coach wore as different an aspect to the vehicle of 1841, as the gold-laced hat and silver shoe-buckles differ from the costume on the identical pavement at the present hour. There was "*the heavy Falmouth*," the weighty York "Highflier," and the lengthy

" Bristol;" and a journey of a hundred miles was an undertaking of time, privation, and endurance.

We trust our hero will not forfeit any claim to such distinction while we confess that a review of his resources, or perhaps the weather, not a little damped his spirit; and fain would he have retraced his steps, on finding at reaching the coach-office, the long body completely full, and every person so occupied on their own affairs as to afford him no information under his dilemma. But the alarum was by this time sounded in the watchmaker's warehouse, and the youth's absence discovered, so that he had no alternative but to proceed at all hazard. In the course of his further inquiry, he learnt that the two-horse " Bath Invalid Coach" would start from a neighbouring office within an hour, but that no other conveyance for that city would leave London before the mail, in which every place had been secured.

Perplexed, and by this time somewhat alarmed, Elliston readily seized the only chance left for him, and paying part of his fare, was booked forthwith in a feigned name. Being now more at ease, he had opportunity for contemplating the probabilities of his incarceration in this rotary lazaretto. The " Invalid " professedly travelled slowly for the benefit of its ailing inmates, taking them only part of the journey on the first day, and concluding it late enough on the second, so that it was a coach

which really performed what it professed to do—namely, "*slept* on the road."

Evidently waiting the arrival of the said "Bath Invalid," a hackney vehicle was drawn up to the office, containing an elderly gentleman, who, as it transpired, had taken one place for his body and another for his legs, which were swaddled in flannel, as he sat at that moment writhing under a severe paroxysm of gout. With a sigh did our young friend gaze upon a face in which were the mingled expression of pain arising from disease, and fury the result of pain. "My penance is likely to go hand in hand with my offence," mentally ejaculated he, as he contemplated two long days in all the horrors of this "middle passage!"

The "Bath pair-horse Invalid" now drew up as solemnly for the elderly gentleman as that still gloomier vehicle which, in all probability, would be the next and last in his mortal service. The operation of transferring him from one body to the other was in progress, which, to the *adagio* of a volley of curses, was at length accomplished. Rewarding his attendants with a look of renewed fury, he pulled up the glasses with all the violence he could master, and was heard no more—for the present.

It was now within ten minutes of the professed time of starting, and as poor Elliston was speculating on the next character he might be introduced to in this drama of "*The Bath Road*," the

coach-door was again opened to the approach, " with lingering steps and slow," of a tall female, labouring under a sharp attack of inflamed eyes, and conducted by a footboy, who was beguiling his tortoise pace by licking what still adhered to the paper wrapper of some baked treacle.

The ceremony of conveying this sufferer to the interior of the coach was nearly as tedious, but a far more grateful task, than the former ; and though our young runaway had still less and less reason to congratulate himself on his fortune of the morning, he could not help feeling some sympathy with the *unsightly* lady, as she timidly took her place to the serenade of the only language the rabid gentleman seemed to have retained the slightest recollection of.

Fixed on the pavement to the very last, though he had heard twenty times the coach was then starting, Elliston, the third patient, entered the narrow ward of this migrating hospital. Placing himself next to the swaddled feet of the raving martyr, and opposite to two faces, one the largest he had ever gazed on out of a masquerade shop, and the other the longest he had ever seen from the convex of a silver spoon, he was conveyed by degrees from the rugged pavement of Piccadilly to travel one hundred and ten miles at the same rate of enjoyment.

CHAPTER II.

A journey, "strange bedfellows"—Ugly knocks—A frozen footboy—Comfortable quarters—A family group—A lovely girl—A Scotch ballad—" Speechifying"—A sleepless night—A parting—Elliston arrives at Bath—" His first appearance upon any stage"—Dimond—Tate Wilkinson, anecdote of, and characteristic letter—Wrench—Elliston's remorse—Letter to his uncle—Acts at Leeds—Increasing despondency—Second letter to Dr. Elliston—A joyful surprise—Young Elliston returns to London—Visits Cambridge—His reception by the Master of Sidney.

THE gouty passenger, as we shall be better informed hereafter, was a certain contractor, who, not very long before, had been indicted for fraud, and sentenced in severe penalties. Having secured, as already mentioned, a double place for his single convenience, he seemed to question the right of any other person to interfere with what remained. As to the " dark" lady on his own side, he took no more notice of her than though she had never been in existence; nor is it surprising, for she was, in fact, by this time, pretty nearly out of it—the contractor's body occupying two-thirds of the seat,

while the redundant folds of his Bath wrapper totally obscured what might still have remained discoverable of his thin neighbour. His look of defiance, therefore, was wholly fixed on the youth in the diagonal direction, whose hale and good-natured countenance certainly refuted any pretensions to a place in the " Invalid," being in a state somewhat similar to the poor, honest, houseless girl, who, on applying for shelter at the " Refuge" for unhappy females, was told she must first go and qualify.

After some miles, the rain began to fall violently. Under a closed window the factor was safely nestled ; but the aperture on the other side admitting the weather directly on the tender optic membrane of his despised companion, she ventured to raise the glass a few inches before her face, on which the man of fraud, abruptly extending his arm, thrust it again into its first position. Elliston, who really, on his own account, would have desired as much air as possible, felt so thoroughly indignant at this piece of brutality, that, seizing the tassel, and at the same time pulling up the frame, he observed—

" Pray, madam, consult your own convenience, and suffer me, for the rest of the journey, to undertake that it be respected ;" on which the contractor spirted some half-articulate language of abuse, which the other had too much discretion to regard.

It was towards the evening when the company had resumed their seats in the coach, after a dinner at

the usual house for stopping, where the false factor had secured to himself nearly the whole of the fire, and demolished quite the whole of a bottle of Madeira, that, to the notes of ventricle growling, which, with him, were both matins and vespers, he fell into a roaring sleep. The cartilaginous bassoon which nature had fixed in the centre of his face seemed to emit indications of rest, while accompanying groans gave equal evidence of endurance. The one-third of the seat which he had at first conceded to the "dark" female was now taxed down to the poor modicum of a fifth. Too nearly suffocated to utter complaint, she might, in fact, have been altogether annihilated, but that her extreme thinness yet preserved vitality in the cleft it occupied.

The trick of nodding appeared (like everything else upon the road) to be overtaking the whole coach, and our young traveller began presently to doze, like a judge upon his seat. How long he slept he could as little ascertain as Gulliver himself when he took his first nap, on being thrown on the shores of *Lilliput;* but his recall to reason was one of the most unequivocal facts, perhaps, ever recorded.

A jolt of the vehicle, in passing over the rotten highway of a certain borough, threw him, bodily, with so much force athwart the horizontal limbs of the snoring factor, that, "ululante dolore," snatching his short crutch at his side, the man of fraud let fall so absolute a crack on the sconce of his un-

conscious offender, that in reverberate accents, shrill as the seabird, and with talons almost as fatal, Elliston seized his assailant by the folds of his fleecy "comforter," and would certainly have strangled him outright, had he not been awakened to fresh terrors by the shriek of the poor obumbrated lady, who, by this time, having been entirely forgotten, appeared to exclaim from the very tomb itself.

This triple indication of distress brought the horses abruptly to a stand, and the coachman alighting to learn the nature of the *mêlée*, both combatants united in abusing him for his interference, on which he deliberately resumed his reins, leaving the two gentlemen, as he expressed it, "to fight it out for the young 'oman as they pleased."

In due time they arrived at Newbury, their resting place for the night. Elliston would now willingly have offered his assistance to his fellow sufferer, the lady, but to his relief, he heard that "*Henriquez*" was in attendance. Hereupon, the identical footboy whom we first noticed on the flags of Piccadilly, descended, or, rather, was handed down from the vehicle—for, in point of fact, he was so nearly frozen as to resemble a stuffed figure over the shop-window of a juvenile outfitter. During the last ten miles, the coachman had suffered him to creep into the boot for the little warmth it might afford, and he was now lifted out quite as hardened, and nearly

as black as his companions, the portmanteaus. Instead of being in attendance, therefore, on his mistress, the poor urchin was taken into the stable, where, undergoing the operation of friction between some wisps of hay, by the hands of the ostler, he was restored, by degrees, to whatever consciousness he once possessed.

Too full of the past for hunger, and too anxious about the future to be sensible of cold, Elliston, our dispirited adventurer, stood leaning against the doorway of the inn, scarcely aware of the repeated supplications of waiters that he would occupy the parlour.

He had been already some time in this state of abstraction, when the hostess herself, impressed, no doubt, by his travelling in the "Invalid," and having no evident infirmity upon him, that his case was one of morbid affection, now advanced towards him. The sorrows of a handsome youth are petitioners rarely dismissed abruptly from the avenues to female sympathy; and as the landlady was really a kind woman, she was willing to extend her good offices on this occasion beyond the mere civilities of her calling. Dropping him a curtsey, she said,—

"I fear, young gentleman, this is but a chilly spot. Pardon me, but you appear to have no friends with you; we have a brisk fire within the bar—my little family are just going to sit down to supper, and we would contrive to make you com-

fortable, if you would step in and partake of what we have."

Never did our friend feel more truly grateful than at this moment. His eye glistened with gratitude; his heart positively leapt with delight.

"My dear madam, I thank you with real sincerity," replied he; "it would indeed be an act of charity."

Following his conductress, Elliston instantaneously found himself in the midst of the domestic circle. A table was most invitingly spread, and there was an air of comfort around, which finds a way into the closet of the heart, while the power of splendour passes not the antechamber of the senses.

"I believe I must tell you, sir," continued his hostess, looking round with evident pride, "this is the birthday of my eldest girl, so we have a little more going on, this evening, than usual; and the younger ones sit up to supper."

Elliston had now an opportunity of observing the party, which consisted of the landlord's father, a small, good-humoured old man, who chuckled at everything he saw and every syllable he heard. Two plain, or rather heavy-looking young men, sat at a distance, evidently guests; their apparel was, however, remarkably neat, and their deportment equally precise; for at every word addressed to them, they rose from their chairs, acknowledging the favour by a kind of half-bow.

The family of the house constituted the remainder of the company—namely, two or three nicely-dressed children, who were collected around their grown-up sister, a fine girl, who had that day attained her sixteenth year. The landlord who, in the interim, had been informed of the presence of his new guest, now made his appearance, and the whole party sat down to supper.

Elliston, warmed by the good cheer, but still more charmed by this spirit of hospitality, rendered himself, as will readily be believed, highly agreeable. He talked much of London—its incidents—its places of amusement—the French Revolution—the taking of the Bastile, at all of which the little old gentleman laughed, as the landlady expressed it, "fit to kill himself." But they all laughed, with the exception of the two plain young men, who still persisted in rising from their chairs, on receiving any portion, which in the course of the repast, fell to their share.

Elliston, who by accident—or it might have been otherwise—was seated next to the fair object of the evening, took occasion to allude to the circumstances of it, in so well-timed and happy a manner that the blushes mounted in the cheeks of the daughter and the tears in the eyes of the mother, at both of which the old gentleman laughed and laughed again.

Still more animated by the passing scene, Elliston now began to repeat bits of poetry and recite scraps

of plays; so that by nine o'clock he had levied contributions on almost the whole acting drama; which though not always apposite to the moment, never failed to make the old gentleman laugh, and we are justified in adding, were equally successful in pleasing his sweet neighbour.

The revel was now at the best, and we might have searched in vain the whole of his Majesty's dominions, to have found a similar number of persons assembled, at this precise moment, more completely happy than the innkeeper's party.

The landlady now turning to her daughter, "Alice, child," said she, "do sing to us your favourite. The sentiment is not quite suited to a birthday merry-making, sir," continued she, addressing herself more particularly to Elliston—"but she does sing it so sweetly, that I much question whether any of your town ladies could excel her." Our enraptured visitor was by no means slow in backing the suit. Not to have surrendered would have been the part of sterner stuff than the temper of poor Alice; with little hesitation, therefore, she began the beautiful ballad of Burns, "Ye banks and braes," &c., which she sang in a style so inartificial, but at the same with taste so evidently cultivated, that the old gentleman, for the first time, did not laugh, but participated in the milder sensations of delight which occupied the whole circle.

It was now nearly eleven o'clock—for time had

played its usual trick with joyous occasions—and the party being about to separate, the little old gentleman, as though to recover what he had missed in the muscular indulgence of his merry spirit, burst into a laugh still more hearty than he had yet displayed. Amongst other things, in the course of Elliston's " speechifying," in the earlier part of the evening, he had invested the two plain young men as " Good Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern," and had placed them against the wall, during some recitation from " Hamlet ;" but having neglected to give them their freedom in due form, they had not taken the freedom themselves of breaking their bondage, but had maintained their mural position throughout the ballad. But on the challenge of the good grandfather to finish the punch, they now stepped forward, and bowing at the same time, took their departure together.

Elliston now retired to bed, but not to repose. So little inclination had he to sleep during the night, that already had it been announced to him the " Invalid" was again starting, before he had closed his eyes. A sudden resolution seized him not to resume his journey—the anticipation of another day with his companions of the preceding, filled him with disgust. He pleaded headache, and in due time the moving " oubliette" was on its toilsome way without him.

He soon, however, rose, and after a hasty break-

fast, turned his steps in the direction of the bar—to thank his hostess for her hospitality—to gain information respecting other conveyances, — with sundry further inquiries, scarcely suspecting, what no one else in the world could have doubted, that the lovely ballad-singer was the sole object of his thoughts.

He had certainly reason to be grateful, for on encountering the waiter, he found that the only demand made upon his purse, was a charge for his bed and breakfast, which though highly favourable to the state of his resources, he would have resisted, had he not been persuaded he should be giving pain.

In that same apartment, which a few hours before rang with the light tones of merriment, but now restored to the trim precision of a well-regulated bar, Elliston made his acknowledgments to his hostess, somewhat less than one hundred times, for her benevolence of the day previous. Alice abruptly entered, but not suspecting a visitor, would have withdrawn. "No, young lady," said he, taking her hand and gently detaining her; "I am come to thank you, too—and how sincerely, I cannot explain. Believe me," continued he, dejectedly, "I may have to look back on the dawn of yesterday with sorrow—with contrition—but let this, at least, be void of mystery, my heart's gratitude for the joy it participated at the close, will never—never be obliterated."

But his hour was come. Mounting the roof of the four-horse coach, with a spirit far weightier than all his worldly effects, once more was he on the king's high road. His gaze, more cleaving than his steps, was still fixed beneath the portal of the inn; and with the hope—with the belief—that he was followed by two sparkling messengers, bright as the herald of day, he gave the signal of a last farewell; when turning sternly round upon his onward course, he looked again his fortune in the face.

"Alas! alas! omnia idem pulvis," cried he, as at that moment, the road itself afforded a ready illustration of human things. And in this wise, dead to all around him, and buried in his own thoughts, he passed speedily into a new existence, as he opened his eyes in the bright city of Bath.

We have been more circumstantial in the account of this escape from London—for we can hardly call it flight,—than the event absolutely demanded; but the incident was one to which, in after life, Elliston himself so frequently alluded, that we have ventured to be so far particular.

Arrived at Bath, Elliston soon discovered the friend already in his confidence, who willingly renewed his promise of giving him an introduction to Mr. Dimond. But the opportunity not appearing at that moment the most favourable, something was to be done in the interim; for the state of his "viaticum" by no means flattered him with any

hope of playing the "walking gentleman" on the *pavé* of this elegant place of resort.

After sundry failures in applications for employment, he obtained the situation of clerk to a lottery-office keeper, at a salary of one guinea per week. Here, ensconced behind a wooden desk, sat the future "hero of a hundred" playhouses; and the infant Majesty of Elliston cribbed in the mahogany fixture of "Hazard's" agent. Often with a sigh did his thoughts revert to the "*confitures*" and first-floor scenes of Madame Cotterille; as often, with still deeper sensations of sadness, to the place he once held in his uncle's esteem. What rendered his time still more burdensome was the want of occupation, for he had little more to do than to sit on a tall stool, and hand over the candidates for the favours of Fortune to her ministers in an inner apartment. In a very few weeks, however, the introduction to Mr. Dimond was accomplished—lottery tickets gave place to box tickets, and the "Wheel of Fortune" was studied under another roof.

Bath at that period was a nursery for the London stage, and though the theatre (since converted into a religious meeting-house) was small, yet under Mr. Dimond's able management and judicious engagement of performers, plays were represented in a very finished manner, and theatrical entertainments ranked amongst the leading objects of this polite portion of the world.

On the 21st of April, 1791, Robert William Elliston made his "first appearance upon any stage," at this city, in the character of *Tressell* in Richard III. The result was all he could have wished. He was received with favour, and went through this well-judged and unambitious part with entire success. The Bath critics had never been found too indulgent, nor a Bath audience to be satisfied with an indifferent material. The following notice, however, appeared in one of their leading journals :—

"..... A young gentleman, whose name we are not yet in possession of, but whose connexions, we understand, are of the highest respectability in the University of Cambridge, sustained the character of *Tressell.* He displayed considerable ability — far greater, indeed, than could have been anticipated from his age, which cannot be more than sixteen or seventeen years."

The Bath theatrical season being near its close, and most of the ensuing acting nights appropriated to benefits, no immediate engagement could be obtained in that place. But fortunately for our young debutant, Wallis (the father of Miss Wallis, then the reigning favourite at Bath, who subsequently became Mrs. Campbell, and a popular actress at Covent Garden Theatre) had witnessed this successful exhibition in *Tressell*, with which he was so much pleased, that, unsolicited, and on what could

scarcely be called a personal acquaintance with our hero, wrote to his old friend Tate Wilkinson in his favour, earnestly recommending him to his notice. As Wallis was a man on whose judgment Wilkinson could safely rely, Elliston received at once an invitation to visit Leeds, which, without hesitation, he joyfully accepted. Not very long afterwards, Wallis had the following reply from the managerial autocrat of the north :—

" On hearing the young man read and rehearse, whom, on a late occasion, you recommended to me, I forthwith engaged him, and he appeared, on the 30th of May, at Leeds, when he acted *Dorilas* much to my satisfaction. He is already very generally liked, and, being a sensible youth, gives the best evidence of becoming an improving actor. His features and voice are very pleasing, and his legs and arms good, but his powers are not extensive. He is of service to me ; and if he always behaves as well as he has conducted himself with me, he will be an acquisition wherever he goes. He has not the common fault of young people—rant, rant. A little more energy and variety would do him no harm."

Tate Wilkinson, known so long as the " eccentric," might, with equal justice, have won the appellation of the " honest," for to either his title was good. He was born in the year 1740. Foote introduced him first to a London audience, in

his "Tea" parties at the Haymarket Theatre. At these entertainments, he occupied the time between the acts of his master, by giving imitations of certain actors, which, perhaps, might have been considered by some the plums of the pudding. On one particular evening, however, he seized an opportunity for throwing in so humorous a mimicry of "*Aristophanes*" himself, that the whole audience were convulsed with laughter. Foote was not a little angry; indeed, he shewed so much ill-temper in the affair, as perfectly to convince the offender that he was—not a man to be imitated.

Wilkinson, by his own perseverance, acquired means, and became ultimately the much-respected manager of the York company. He had, however, sundry peculiar habits. During his career as manager, if any member of his company had obstinately neglected to listen to his advice on any particular point of acting, or the like, he would mount, on some future night, into the gallery, and hiss most strenuously—an expedient which presently brought the trifler to his senses. On one occasion, being more than usually indignant at some very slovenly exhibition on the stage, his hiss was remarkably audible. The delinquent actor, however, seemed to have friends around him, for on a cry of "Turn him out!" poor Wilkinson was unceremoniously handed down from his own gallery and ejected into the street. Notwithstand-

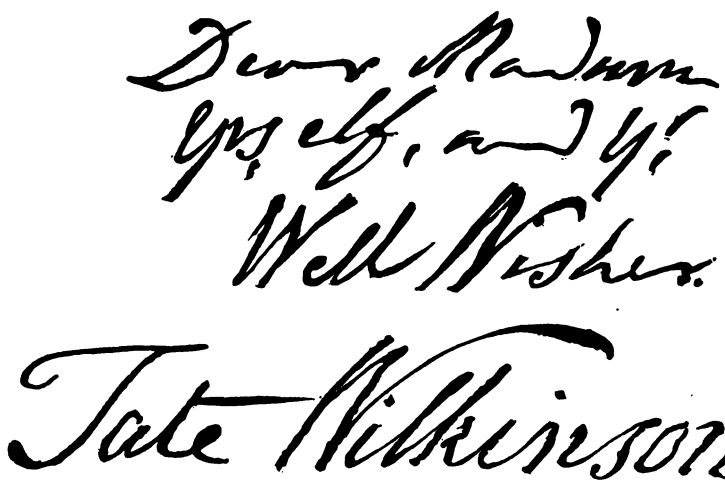
ing, he still maintained this useful and very disinterested experiment.

To personages more worthy his regard, and of higher consideration in their art, he would prefer addressing himself by writing, when he believed that any advice of his might be of service. We have an original letter of Wilkinson to this effect, addressed to Miss Campion, who was afterwards Mrs. Spencer, and ultimately Mrs. Pope, on her first appearance at York in the part of *Juliet*. The letter is singular enough—written in characters half an inch high, on the largest and coarsest folio, exhibiting much such a billet as would raise a laugh in a harlequin farce. The matter, however, is of better proportion, which we here beg leave to transcribe, particularly as the lady in question became subsequently so celebrated in this character of *Juliet* at Covent Garden Theatre:—

"Oct. 5, —95.

"Dear Madam,—Without compt, I think that your Balcony Scene, in many Passages, has more simplicity than that of any Actress of ye many I have seen from ye year 1752. But here and there you want Quickness and Variety; as, for instance, 'Romeo, Juliet, all slain,' &c., which shd run into a sudden climax; and you shd say *Pha e ton*, not *Phæton*. You shd also be discovered on ye Bed, exactly ye same as when left after ye Draught. In ye Soliloquy, you shd plead to Tibalt, in your

Frensy, on one side, & on y^e^ other, as to Romeo. I can give you a better mode of waking in y^e^ Tomb; and where you stab y^r^self, I will shew you Mrs. Cibber's method. When you have to say 'There rest and let me die,' y^e^ dagger sh^d^ remain, and not be thrown away, as that is a contradiction to y^e^ Words. Favor me with a call by half p^t^ 12 on Thursday, after I have seen y^r^ Monimia, and every Hint in my Power you may command for y^e^ mutual Interest of,



When Wrench made his *debut* in the York company, Tate took his usual station in the front of the house, (for he went there to admire as well as to censure;) and at the end of the play, which was "Speed the Plough," wherein Wrench had acted the part of *Henry*, he hobbled into the green-room, exclaiming — "Where's Mr. *Drench?*" (for he

seldom called anybody by his right name.) "Here, sir," replied the young actor. "Sir, you're a clever *Wench*," continued Wilkinson, tapping him on the shoulder. "There's some roast beef in you, Mr. *French*."

But to return to our own hero. Elliston having immediately acquired notice, became soon the favourite "leader" on the York "circuit." Never had a "junior" risen so rapidly into business, or gained so many verdicts by virtue of a speech. A constant succession of new and unstudied characters being put into his hands, his time was fully occupied for several months.

Nothing could be more encouraging than this early period of his career. In equal favour with his manager and the public, and receiving nightly the "spirit-stirring" reward of his labours, we might have been induced to believe that smiles alone were the wages of indiscretion, and a light heart the consequence of folly. But the unfailing lesson was at hand—hitherto had he had no time for thought, or thought only on one subject. His mind now underwent a painful reaction. He became reserved, gloomy, depressed. A recollection of his uncle's repeated expressions of hope and confidence in his advancement to academic honours, pierced him like so many daggers. Months had passed away, and no indication had he given of contrition; no intelligence, which would at least have removed suspense,

had he communicated or attempted. Late, but more bitter, was his remorse; and he now became so totally changed in manner, and unfit for his professional duties, as to excite the anxiety of those around him. "Stung with the thoughts of home," he withdrew for some days from the theatre, and resolved at length to address Dr. Elliston by letter. After many unsuccessful attempts, he composed the following:—

"SIR,—However dismayed I find myself in this undertaking, and however ashamed I feel at my conduct towards you, yet I know the attempt to gain your forgiveness is my duty. I have taken courage, therefore, to proceed. Fearful as I have reason to be of your anger,—how shall I address you—or what can I allege?—I can see no middle state between that of the beloved nephew (as I have a thousand proofs to know I once was) and the discarded Robert Elliston. If but a faint ray of hope would break in to lead me to suppose I should ever regain your confidence and esteem, I should then indeed be happy. Of my transgressions, let me confess, I am truly, deeply sensible.

"Unfortunately for me, the profession I have chosen by no means meets with the concurrence of even my general friends,—and the world at large has hitherto held it in the light of contempt. What was the infatuation which first prompted me to swerve

from the path of wisdom and rectitude which you had pointed out, I know not: had I followed that, I might have made a reputable stand in life—at any rate, moving in a circle more honoured than that into which I have thrown myself. But it is not for me to aggravate my misfortunes; my task should rather be to reconcile them. If I succeed in removing any portion of your anger, I more than repay myself—if not, it is at least a trifling evidence of my affection, though repaying not a thousandth part of what I am indebted to you. Mitigate, I pray you, your resentment. My most sanguine hopes do not hint at sudden, or perhaps at any period, entire forgiveness. Suffer me to write to you now and then—to feel that I am addressing you—to relieve my aching heart, by assuring you how I love and honour you. May I entreat, too, you will not let my mother participate with me your anger. I declare to you she is blameless in respect of this step I have taken.

"Imperfectly as I may have written, I still venture to send you this sincere confession; but no attempt at extenuation of my conduct. Your justice I must ever fear—in your mercy I may have hope.

"Your affectionate
and contrite nephew,

"York, April 6th, 1792."

The very despatch of this letter brought relief to his heart, which he fain would have mistaken for pardon already received—a delusion not very dissimilar to that in after life, when, on giving a bill at six months to his timber merchant, he exclaimed, "Thank God, that fellow's paid?" The sincerity, however, which dictated the above epistle we do not for a moment question; and his very sanguine temper came not inopportunely to his aid. Elliston returned to his duties, a new man. What the Bath waters could never have effected, his own prescription had readily accomplished. His health was restored—and thus his first engagement at York was brought to the pleasing termination of pecuniary profit and editorial approbation.

But alas! nothing was responded from Cambridge—no reply reached him from his uncle. This continued silence reduced him again to a state of great mental suffering. Till now he had not felt himself *disowned*:—any reproaches had relieved him—any sentence had been milder. This was the more distressing as it was about the period of his making a first appearance on the Hull Theatre. His fame had long preceded him in that quarter; and on the following week he was to justify his credit. He felt he should fail, and became indeed almost indifferent to the result. The night arrived; and in the most flattering manner he was received in the part of *Young Marlow*. But his forebodings

were no less true. He did fail—his acting was languid or unnaturally forced; and although the press appeared to acknowledge all that had been hitherto reported of his quality, yet he well knew his effort on that night dropped short of the goal. A second hollow triumph like the first he was persuaded would undo him. Determined to recover all, he repeated the character in such good heart, that his spirit was rekindled, and the flame he watchfully fed with unabating industry.

After eight months, however, from the date of his first epistle, he contemplated a second. But as most penitential compositions, like love-letters and sea-fights, are pretty much alike, we shall forbear serving up any further entertainment of the sort, and merely offer our guests a broken corner—this is given from

"Hull, Dec. 25th, —92,
"At Mr. Thompson's, Black Fryar's Gate.

". . . . Do not mistake me, sir; my supplication is not prompted by any hardships which I have suffered, for I am receiving a competency—am respected as an actor, and welcomed as a friend. These sighs arise from the degrading position in which I stand before you. With respect to the profession I have chosen, I know public impression is unfriendly to it. Some of its members may be profligate and immoral; but the state of an actor is that of being almost as much before the public

when off the stage, as on it. His errors and indiscretions are presently abroad, and the world therefore may too hastily be led to imagine that the life of an actor is inseparable from shame. But, sir, this is not true; or if it be true, I have indeed been singularly fortunate in being placed amongst so many worthy exceptions. Believe me, sir, it shall at least be *my* endeavour to carry into this profession, and to maintain throughout my career, whether it be brief or extended, the principles and conduct of a man of honour and morality."

Well said, resolution!—and nothing, we can assure our readers, will give us greater pleasure than in finding ourselves enabled, as we proceed, to prove how satisfactorily our young moralist redeemed those weighty pledges, for we are quite sure that trials will await his fortitude.

Having despatched this second letter, he was fully resolved to arm himself for the worst; and as he was daily adding to the stock of his professional renown, he had reason to believe that public favour might in some degree compensate the loss of parental regard.

Amongst other subjects of meditation, let it not be supposed the gentle Alice was forgotten. "When the heart of a man's oppressed with care," nothing could have come kindlier to his relief. He steeped his thoughts in the recollection of her beauty, as a kind of anodyne to his aching uncertainty; and

cajoled himself into love to supply the void of a sequestered home. He even went so far as to compose eight lines towards a sonnet; but as the second decade of Livy is not more irretrievably lost, we can give no copy of the impassioned fragment.

It was early in the next year, February, —93, and on a certain morning about as forbidding as that on which he "left his father's house," when in the act of raising the street latch of his lodging, to proceed to rehearsal, Elliston was startled by a double rap at the entrance, which set his very pulse into a gallop. It was the postman—a letter!—not for his own landlady, though she was still indebted in her Christmas rent, and held under a hard landlord, nor for the medical student in the second floor, who had really a great frailty for corresponding, but for *himself*—"Mr. Robert W. Elliston"—the post mark "Cambridge," and the hand-writing, that of his uncle, the Master!

The contents might have been the bursting of overcharged anger, and a sentence of final abandonment—but never, surely, had slighted lover been thrown into such ecstatic joy by the impression of a seal as our dramatic truant at this moment. He kissed it—pressed it to his bosom, and played about as many antics as Tom Jones, on discovering Miss Western's pocket-book on his road from Upton; and a very simpleton, indeed, were any stander-by who could have been persuaded that the specimen in

question was no other than a lecture from a grave old gentleman and Master of a college. Yet such was the case. No rehearsal that morning. A half-guinea fine stood in the place of "Mr. Elliston called for the reading of the new piece at ten;" for there was another manuscript to be looked at, and that the letter from Sidney!

The tone of the Doctor was just that which a man of sense and sensibility would have adopted—it was the dove with the olive—but the waters were not subsided.

"Much as I have cause for indignation," said he, "I write less to reproach than to instruct—less to satisfy any vindictive feeling which I might have towards you, than to offer a lesson, which, if yet timely, will content me more than the exaction of penalties. Tears, and a mere confession of error, are little—they may indeed be a suit for pardon, but they are no evidence of amendment. This, as it can only be the work of time, so will I consent to receive no other evidence of it. No renewal of my favour will I offer you on trust—whatever portion of this you may acquire, you must win. If these be not the most indulgent terms, I am sure they are the most valuable I can offer you."

In alluding to the stage, the Doctor observed he was willing to accredit some truth to the apology expressed on the condition of an actor, but the re-

gret that his pupil had embraced the profession would attend him to his grave.

Our happy friend, it will readily be believed, lost no time in forwarding a grateful acknowledgment to his excellent monitor, in which, in the full confidence of his virtuous abundance, he renewed those several bills he had formerly given for the payment of good conduct, loading them with such additional interest, that we forbear to set them out, lest our readers should tremble for his obligations.

The spring of this year terminated the youth's engagement with Wilkinson; and he hastened early in May to London, for the purpose of paying his personal duty to his uncle Elliston, who had been, for some time past, on a visit at Professor Martyn's, in Frith Street, Soho. On his arrival, however, he learnt the Doctor had quitted London for Cambridge—a piece of intelligence which came not unacceptably to his temporary relief; for, to confess the truth, his courage had been wondrously oozing somewhere during the whole journey, so that he was in fact "little better than a coward," as he mounted the steps of the Botanical lecturer. In respect of his uncle Martyn, he had never stood in quite the same awe, so that, on the whole, it might have been fortunate that events had thus turned out—for he now consulted with this relative the most prudent way of proceeding; and, by his advice, finally resolved on going to Cambridge,

though he had no hope of any boon beyond a mere interview with the master. "Your happiness," observed the Professor, "is an object as much at your uncle's heart as ever; but Dr. Elliston is not a man to be grievously offended, and be again won by a few idle regrets. To youth, he has always been considerate—ever made allowances——"

"——Yes, sir; and they were never short allowances, believe me," interrupted the abashed actor, in a manner which flavoured a little of the lamps—"he shall find me yet worthy his regard."

To Cambridge he went. The sight of old St. Mary's Church, and the glories of the Senate House, now barred against him for ever, smote him in keen recollection of the past; and as he trailed along the quadrangle of the small college, over which he once had bounded, tears rose in his eyes, and depression weighed down all sentiment of fear. His uncle received him with the affection of a well-disciplined mind; and heard, with more than patience, perhaps, the repeated story of contrition. But Elliston was no guest at the Lodge. This interview was all that was conceded; and if he did not commence his return with a heart abounding in satisfaction, it had been at least supplied by a modicum of instruction, which we have reason for believing played also the part of meat and drink to the body, during nine hours on his journey back to London.

CHAPTER III.

Elliston's introduction to John Kemble—His success in *Romeo*—Old actors in young parts—Family feuds—A *Thespian* wagon—An awkward meeting with an old acquaintance——Elliston a hero in earnest—"A conflagration—Don Juan in his element—"A speech"—A *capital* writing-master—A friendly go-between—Miss Flemming, an amorous spinster—Tactics—A lovely woman—Miss Rundall—Machinations—"A positive engagement"—George Colman—Elliston a married man — Elliston at the Haymarket Theatre — *Octavian*—Critiques—*Sheva*—Colman's letter—Mr. Gore—Jocular epistle—George III.

PROFESSOR MARTYN, by the assistance of his old fellow-collegian, Dr. Farmer,* now introduced our young aspirant to Mr. George Steevens,† who

* Author of an "Essay on the Learning of Shakspeare," and Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

† George Steevens, the able coadjutor of Dr. Johnson, in an edition of the Works of Shakspeare, whose testimony to the worth of the great lexicographer should be ever borne in mind, as his character has been too frequently misunderstood,—"It is unfortunate," says Steevens, "that his particularities and frailties can be more distinctly traced than his good and amiable exertions. Could the many bounties he studiously concealed, the many acts of humanity he performed in private, be displayed with equal circumstantiality, his defects would be so far lost in the blaze of his virtues, that the latter would alone be visible."

took an early opportunity for making him personally known to Mr. John Kemble. By that gentleman Elliston was received with much courtesy; he heard him recite, and the country candidate for metropolitan advancement went through the usual ordeal. The effect of these interviews was extremely flattering. Mr. Kemble suggested the part of *Romeo* for Elliston's particular study, proposing that character for his first London appearance, at Drury Lane Theatre. It was July, 1793, in which these meetings took place, and as the new splendid edifice was not then completed, nor likely to be so by the ensuing winter, it was arranged that Elliston should appear about the commencement of the season 1794. For the interim, Mr. Kemble strongly recommended that he should return either to Bath or York. "The former," said he, "is, I think, preferable. You require but study, the want of which no genius in the world can supply. It is the exercise of an art which forms the artist; and some day," added he, with a smile, "you may repay this advice with the ingratitude of disputing with me public favour."

Mr. Dimond was at this precise time acting at Richmond. Thither Elliston went on the following day—an engagement was speedily concluded between them—for the Bath manager had had too favourable a foretaste of the young actor's quality, not to desire a fresh importation of it.

Bidding adieu, in a less abrupt manner than on the first occasion, to his parents in Charles-street, with whom he had lodged during his stay in London, Elliston retraced his steps to Bath, in October, and made his second appearance there, in the same month, in the character recommended to his attention by Mr. Kemble. His success in *Romeo* was a yet brighter colouring of that hue which had decked his earlier days. The wild, romantic passion of the Veronese boy—the pouring out of soul on the altar of a youth's first dream—the glowing diction of the poet, and the "mould of form" in which nature would have best rejoiced for the lodgment of such a spirit—stood forth, a beautiful identity of that vision which imagination wakens, as it dwells on the progress of this Italian tale.

Complete and brilliant as was the success of his second visit to Bath, Elliston was, for a time, shut out from the "first line of business," to which he had now become reasonably entitled. For although the days of which we speak belonged certainly to the palmy era of the drama, yet they were not altogether free from faulty usages and detrimental example. The youthful parts of either tragedy or comedy were yet in the hands of certain actors, who once, indeed, might have graced them well, but who still retained them, on the claim of thirty years' enjoyment!—a plea,

which though good and sufficient to the fee-simple of dirty acres, became a questionable tenure to the brighter territory of art. The creation of the poet, gifted, indeed, to flourish in "immortal youth," but ill became the unconscious actor, "grown dim with age," unless, indeed, as fast approaching that second childhood, he might hope in a few years more to advance his first pretensions.

We remember to have met with a somewhat ludicrous incident in point, which transpired, years ago, on the "Western Circuit." An aged actor, having pertinaciously clung to light comedy long after he had been blessed with a numerous family, had amongst them a son of considerable theatrical ability, but it was in the line of *old men*. This youth made the first trial of his skill at Exeter, in the part of *Sir Anthony*, in the comedy of "The Rivals," wherein the venerable favourite, his father, was equipped, as usual, for *Jack Absolute*. The play, it will be at once remembered, must have afforded many points which consequently became mightily absurd; but when the enraged baronet had to exclaim—"I'll disown you—I'll unget you—I'll never call you Jack again!" it produced a roar in the theatre which far surpassed any indication of delight the talent of the young man was able afterwards to excite.

The fame Elliston had acquired in *Romeo*, at

Bath, quickly reverberated through the theatrical circles of London, and Mr. Kemble appeared anxious to bring the contemplated engagement to a final settlement. A meeting thereon took place between the great Tragedian and the learned Professor, but the salary offered, and other considerations, were of such a nature as to render the project by no means advisable—the negotiation therefore was dropped.

In August, 1794, Elliston came to London, in consequence of serious and repeated disagreements which had taken place between his parents. These now terminated in a separation of the parties.

> "————Clocks will go as they are set; but man,
> Irregular man's ne'er constant—never certain,"

says the poet; and, true enough, the watchmaker had of late contributed rather to the *tableau vivant* of Hogarth's "Midnight Conversation," than to the picture of domestic enjoyment. His affairs, in short, were now wound up, and the stock sold off. Young Elliston undertook the support of her who had never failed in parental kindness to him, and the "*Distressed Mother*" once more occupied his thoughts in London, attended with applause more hearty than any he had hitherto experienced—that of his own conscience. The old gentleman, his father, became the joint care of his two uncles.

At the usual period for opening the theatrical campaign, Elliston again returned to Bath, or,

rather, Bristol—for it was at that city operations commenced; the company playing certain nights, but not alternately, at one place or the other.

For the conveyance of the actors from city to city, the proprietors had built two carriages, of the "caterpillar" tribe, each having eight small wheels: the first of their kind known in England. The regulations under which this vehicular system prospered, were precise and rigid. Within the body of one of these caterpillars, the actors and actresses, after the night's performances at the theatre of one town, were carried to the very stage-door of another, and—not one step beyond. There was no calling at this lodging, and setting down at that—nothing of the mourning-coach accommodation, which, after the solemn obsequies to the dead, will take you an airing to Islington, and drop you afterwards at the London Tavern—but, strictly and literally, so many furlongs were measured, and not a pole to spare. Arrived at the said stage-door, at about two o'clock in the morning, the caterpillar was delivered of its burden—out they came, "all ladies and gentlemen concerned"—the half-clothed aurelia or the full-dressed butterfly, just as it might happen, to seek their own particular shelter—

"Dicitur et plaustris vexisse poemata Thespis."

Sauntering, one morning, with a friend, on that conventional spot where some assemble to dissipate

their lives, and others to patch them up—namely, the Pump Room—Elliston noticed, at a trifling distance, a figure enveloped in sundry flannels, whom he at once recognised as his fellow traveller in the "Invalid." Scarcely could he forbear a smile, on the first recollection of that pugnacious morning, but

> "Young men soon give and soon forget offence—
> Old age is slow to both"—

and so it appeared. Breaking from his companion, he approached the footstool of this polluted "*Mufti*," and in mock solemnity of tone, said—"If I am so fortunate as to live in your recollection, sir, allow me to lament that you are still under your severe sentence—but we have all our trials." On which, to Elliston's further astonishment, notwithstanding his lesson and experience, with a look which would have become Jefferies himself at the plea of Richard Baxter, the other, in half-smothered accents, replied—"Scaramouch!"

A ludicrous air of perplexity which Elliston now observed in the bystanders, convinced him there was something yet to be explained. "Don't you know him?" asked his companion. "That is Mr. D——, of the Corn-market—a rogue in grain, as they call him at Bath. No one speaks to him here, unless to affront him, as you have done. Sentence!—trial!—why, the equivoque was quite dramatic!" He then went on to explain the

history of the indictment, whereof the reader "hath by parcels heard, but not distinctively."

An adventure took place about this time, which, by one particular, was rendered somewhat remarkable. A musical star being in the ascendant, and opera, consequently, the zenith of the "bills," Elliston's duties did not call him to the theatre until late in the evening, when he had to play the part of *Don Juan*, for about the fiftieth time. Passing down an obscure street, on his way thither, his ears were suddenly startled by indications of terror and distress, and he discovered, on turning abruptly into a narrow court, the lower part of a house enveloped in flames. The occupiers had escaped unhurt, and most of them, miserably poor, were watching, either in stupid agony, or with unavailing cries, the sure destruction of their crazy chattels; while others, attracted to the spot by mere curiosity, looked on the scene only as an exhibition prepared for their special gratification, and every fresh evidence of ruin, but as a *coup de théâtre*, which they welcomed with applause.

Mingling with the bewildering appeals of the surrounding sufferers, the most heart-rending were those of a middle-aged female, who, running from spot to spot, and threading the crowd without any identical purpose of action, exclaimed—"Poor Jamie! he's gone—he's gone!—no one can help poor, daft Jamie!" By the language and manner

of the woman, it was clear some one yet remained unrescued, and at the mercy of the element. Elliston instantly pushed forward to the frantic suppliant, and soon understood that, in an upper apartment, some helpless being was still imprisoned, whose awful fate was momentarily expected. A side-door of the house afforded still the possibility of ingress. Of this chance Elliston availed himself—he rushed up the staircase, followed fortunately by a bystander, emboldened by his example, and found himself instantaneously in a wretched attic, where, on a still more wretched pallet, lay extended a poor bed-ridden being, whose state of idiotcy seemed roused to a glimmering sense of some proximate danger, but who had neither power of utterance nor ability of motion.

Amidst the varied evidences of decay around him, this wreck of humanity—age, idiotcy, and infirmity, with their attendant poverty, each in its extreme—powerfully affected our hero. Lost for a moment to the frightful progress of the element, he stood motionless and appalled.

"'Tis useless!" exclaimed the man who had followed Elliston into the house—"he cannot be saved! the stairs are already in flames!" "He can—he shall!" was the reply—"be steady, and we can accomplish it."

Approaching the bed, Elliston raised the poor creature in his arms, and binding about him the

tattered remnant of sheet and clothing—as much to disarm his feeble attempts to be free, as for the covering it might afford—carried him to the head of the staircase. The clamour of apprehension and encouragement from the mob below, kept his energy at its pitch, but to descend the flight thus encumbered was impossible. The fire was mounting, and suffocation threatening. With difficulty he had passed to the first landing, where, forcing a side-window, he presented his nearly-rescued charge to the multitude. But the shrieks and struggles of the sufferer—the difficulty of making the crowd understand that they were to assist him from below, all, imperatively, the work of a few seconds—had nearly left them in one common ruin. At length, however, by the aid of his companion, all was accomplished. The living burden, lifted on the sill, was lowered by the fragile tackle, and fell, unhurt, into the contrived treillage of the people. The two liberators now effected their own escape, and within three minutes the whole interior was in flames.

Disentangling himself from the embraces of the women, (as little befitting *Don Juan* as his escape from fire,) Elliston now, like good *Launcelot*, "took to his heels and ran," reaching the theatre just in time to see a substitute *Libertine*, like other ragouts, "dressed on the shortest notice," and ready to be served up in his place. An apology had been made to the audience for his absence, but

the cause of it was still an interesting mystery. In a few words, he explained to his apologist the event of the evening, who, taking the opportunity of Elliston's dressing, again presented himself before the curtain, and repeated the slight account he had received, with considerable point.

"Don Juan," he added, "as announced in the bills, had already 'descended in a shower of *real fire*,' but having set his very fate at defiance, he had effected his return, to receive, as he richly deserved, a still warmer sentence at the hands of his judges now present." His welcome, as may be well supposed, was most enthusiastic. Called upon to tell his own story, *Elliston* was as much in his element as *Don Juan*—for he had *to make a speech;* a faculty which, though in after life he greatly improved, he by no means inconsiderably possessed at this present. The above incident gave such additional attraction to this drama, that it was scarcely out of the bills at any part of the season.

So much for the adventure itself; but Elliston, who, it will be readily believed, took the earliest opportunity of searching out the unhappy patient he had rescued, discovered that he had originally been an actor, and frequently a fellow labourer with the great Macklin. Indiscretion, and consequent want of employment, had brought on this state of mental aberration and wretchedness. Elliston continued his kindness to him till he died.

The prosperity of our hero at this time, "like a full ear of corn," demanded only the gathering—and to do him justice, he was neither careless of the present nor unmindful of the future. His address, and the respectability of his connexions, made him familiar with several resident families, while, on the other hand, his acquaintance was courted by many visitors from the capital, who, by a certain air of patronage they assumed, were evidently looking forward to the idle gratification of claiming the first indagation of his merit, when he might have become the centre of metropolitan attraction.

The residence of Elliston was at the house of a highly respectable widower, who professed to give instruction in the caligraphic art—a science which, with that enthusiasm which should attend every man in his own vocation, he placed immeasurably above all other accomplishments necessary to the polite world;—to write a good letter was, clearly, to write a good hand. Not that he considered the *matter* altogether unworthy attention, but held it, as some of our musical composers esteem poetry, as merely the vehicle for a more rectified essence. He was the first who convinced the public by a framed and glazed evidence of facts, which, occupying the centre pane of the parlour window, announced the following:—"This is a specimen of my hand-writing, before taking lessons of Mr.

C——;" and a rude specimen it was, to all intents and purposes. Immediately below—"This is a specimen of my hand-writing, after taking six lessons of Mr. C——;" and a more rapid progress could not reasonably have been expected, for no copper-plate could match it. It was in this worthy gentleman's society Elliston occasionally passed a leisure evening, and as the writing-master was in the habit of giving little card entertainments, the fortunate actor found an agreeable relaxation in the acquaintance.

A certain merry dame, who, in after years, was an *amie du cœur* of the Elliston family, was generally a visitor on such occasions—a sprightly, agreeable woman, who, by frequent hints and other indirect expressions, led the young actor to understand that he was held in very enviable favour in a quarter by no means to be slighted, and that it would be his own fault if his fortune were not greatly improved. In fact, she offered to become the means of making him acquainted with a lady in Bath, well known as a personage of great taste and acquirements, "to which consideration," continued his fair friend, "she had certainly forfeited no particle of claim, in her admiration of so accomplished a gentleman as Mr. Elliston." For this pretty speech he could express no less than gratitude, and the introduction soon took place.

The tasteful personage in question was a Miss

Flemming, whose reputation as a teacher of dancing and corrector of manners had long been pre-eminent at Bath. She was not, at this period, extremely young, nor had been, perhaps, at any, particularly handsome; but what time might have ran away with, or nature but niggardly bestowed, her own diligence had more liberally supplied—liberally, but discreetly—for she was a woman, unquestionably, of judgment, where her passions did not interfere; and one, to use Knowles's happier words—

> " ———Whose fortieth year
> No autumn, but a second summer brings."

The tenour of her course had never been disturbed by any desires foreign to its nature or dangerous to its interests; an early round at quadrille, or an occasional visit at the " Rooms," was all that prying curiosity could lay to her charge on the score of frivolity.

Miss Flemming now suddenly discovered an irrepressible desire for the drama. True, she eschewed Congreve and Farquhar, as low; but the " fine and serious parts of the 'Provoked Husband' " were quite of another texture. Frequently, she occupied a side-box at the theatre, and under no circumstances would be absent whenever Elliston was advertised for both play and farce. These facts, with sundry invitations to select parties at the lady's residence, very naturally excited a whis-

per in the Bath coteries—an event which, considering Miss Flemming's appropriation of prudence, might appear a little extraordinary.

But this lady was not without her motives; for instead of placing the most implicit confidence in a direct offer of marriage, as some silly, short-sighted women would have done, she played, what she considered, the surer game, of building up an implied engagement, of which, the wider the whisper circulated, the more would the foundations be strengthened. As to Elliston himself, he heard all these surmises with that careless indifference which belongs to youth; for although sensible of his obligations to the lady's patronage, he was as cold under the irradiation of her smiles, as the snow-capped Andes beneath the torrid zone.

Such was the state of things, when, at one of these select meetings, he beheld, for the first time, a Miss Rundall, the principal assistant in Miss Flemming's academy. This young lady, of considerable personal attractions and sweetness of manner, Miss Flemming had dexterously, until now, kept out of sight, and would fain still have preserved her at a distance, but the introduction could no longer be avoided. Suppressing suspicion, therefore, of what she most dreaded, she too soon perceived the tender contest would be hopeless on her part. Yet, if retreat were in-

evitable, she still hoped to harass the enemy, and took up her cautious position accordingly.

Elliston, at once struck by the lustre of Miss Rundall, was soon entirely captivated by her address; but his generosity, and, perhaps, his interest, not a little, induced him to conduct himself in such a manner towards Miss Flemming, that under no fair pretence could he be curtailed the privilege which had once been so cordially conceded to him, of visiting at the house. With the short course of wooing, it will be unnecessary to detain the reader,—particularly as we bear in mind the caution of *Ranger*, that "nothing looks so silly as a pair of your true lovers." Suffice it to say, a mutual sentiment occupied the hearts of the youthful twain; and Elliston, within "a fortnight and odd days," *eperdument amoureux*, avowed his passion to one of the sweetest women in England, which Miss Flemming heard with feelings not dissimilar to those of Queen Elizabeth on learning that Leicester was married to Amy Robsart.

The probability of the above event, foreseen by Miss Flemming, she had yet hoped to circumvent, by rendering the gentleman previously so involved with herself, as to be no longer at his own disposal; but the rapid progress of the passion of the youthful pair, and her own hasty prodition, reduced her case to a hopeless extremity. Frustrated in the

first object of her heart, she now looked to the full gratification of the second, which was, of course, to prevent the match. Immediately, she addressed a letter to the parents of Miss Rundall, saying, their daughter had formed a dangerous acquaintance with a player, and, unless they at once interposed their authority by giving her—Miss Flemming—the right of forbidding any further intercourse, the worst consequences might ensue.

On this intelligence, the brother of the young lady arriving, booted and spurred, at Bath, Miss Flemming looked on her triumph as complete; but, to her utter dismay, she found it was the intention of Mr. Rundall to remove his sister altogether from Miss Flemming, and carry her off to London. Miss Flemming well knew that the *Don*, Elliston himself, was on the eve of departure for the metropolis, to negotiate an engagement of another description, and had great reason to fear that the joint supplications of the devoted lovers would carry their point with the Rundall family—an event which she had determined more narrowly to have watched, had the lady been permitted to remain under her roof. But darker still was the prospect to poor Miss Flemming. Miss Rundall had been her assistant for thirteen years; her manners and amiable disposition had materially tended to the success of the academy, and secured to it the highest patronage; the removal, therefore, was as dangerous to Miss F.'s

worldly interests as fatal to her heart's desire—like the sailors, who, to lighten the ship, threw over their bags of biscuits, she had parted with the very means by which she prospered.

This occurrence very soon became a topic of public curiosity; and as both Elliston and Miss Rundall were special favourites with many of the best families, the peculiar nature of their distresses soon excited the sympathy of the generous of both sexes. A kind of Amphictyonic council was held on the matter; and the result was, a request forwarded by several of the *beau monde* of Bath to the friends of Miss Rundall, that she might be permitted to return, and that she should receive the best patronage, on opening an academy either as Miss Rundall or "Mrs. Elliston."

Thus was another battle lost to the Flemming. Baffled on every point, the most miserable of dupes, betrayed by her own machinations, she would fain have quitted the field altogether. Calling once more a council of war, the question was ultimately settled by treaty. To the request forwarded as above, to the friends of Miss Rundall, Miss Flemming subjoined *her own;* but representing the unadvisableness of two dancing interests, which would be ultimately fatal to both, she offered to receive Miss Rundall into partnership. After a little further correspondence, the matter was arranged. Miss Rundall returned to Bath—the articles were signed

—"join hands—set partners"—and the matrimonial question left altogether to the discretion of the parties themselves.

As Elliston had lately received some undeniable evidences of his uncle's presiding favour, he now diligently sought to cherish and deserve so generous a sentiment. Late events had rendered a communication with the Master almost imperative, and too happy was our young lover in the opportunity of again addressing him by letter. This he did, announcing that it was more than probable he should soon enter on an engagement at the Haymarket Theatre, in London, and transmitted 50*l.*, being part of his first professional savings, which the Doctor subsequently placed in the three per cents., in their joint names.

"There is now, sir, a subject," said he, in continuation, "on which it still more becomes me to speak, and which although, through circumstances, greatly advanced, must still await your approbation: —what I allude to, is an attachment I have formed to a young lady of this place, and whom I ardently desire to make my wife. Severed as I have been from my earlier friends, it has been my endeavour, in forming new ones, to connect myself with those who may do the first no dishonour, should they again restore me to their favour. I shall not detain you by hackneyed professions of devotion to the happiness of the lady to whom I have alluded, or

speak at length of the rare qualities of her mind and person. This, I am aware, would be language received too much as a matter of course; but I may be permitted to say, for your own satisfaction, that she is a lady of great respectability, and one who is regarded with the highest respect by those who are themselves most respected."

It was early in this year, (1796,) that Professor Martyn having had some communication with Mr. Colman, respecting Elliston's appearance at the Haymarket, did not seem to favour any extraordinary haste in the matter. "Colman's circumstances," says he, "are not at present prosperous, and the pieces acted are, as I understand, but one remove from farce." But London had now taken full possession of the actor's imagination, and all objections were but as new incentives to his purpose.

Mr. Colman writes as follows:—

"Piccadilly, 16th April, 1796.

"SIR,—I have by this post written to Mr. Dimond, requesting leave of absence for you, for a few days, in the course of June. Will you be kind enough to see him on the subject?

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

Mr. Dimond, very handsomely, at once acquiesced, and a second letter arrived on the 26th, in which Colman says,—" I have many doubts about *Octavian*, and as many about your appearing in a new piece. A new drama is a risk of itself, and should it fail, the new actor must, in some measure, fail with it. If, however, you will send a line to Mr. Cross, I will peruse his piece.* Let me have immediately a list of the characters you have performed, and mark those in which you think you have been successful."

In a subsequent letter Colman observes,—" If so valiant, e'en venture on the characters you propose, *Octavian*, *Sheva*, *Hamlet*. *Hamlet*, perhaps, requires further deliberation. But you will feel the pulse of the town by first playing the other two. As to *Young Wilding*, it is to be remembered that Mr. Palmer will be with me, who is established in the part. This fact I leave to your discretion."

On the 8th of June, Elliston thus announced his marriage to his uncle at Cambridge:—

" My dear Sir,—It would be difficult for me to imagine an occasion more happy than an union with the lady who has become my wife, and the privilege of communicating the fact to you.

" In adding a connexion to that family, of which

* This was good advice in Colman; the piece, when produced, did fail—it was entitled, " The Charity Boy."

you are justly the pride and ornament, I have done it no discredit in the choice I have made; for I have united with it all that goodness of heart, sweetness of temper, or intellectual capabilities could confer. In point of fortune we meet on equal terms, and it will be our mutual endeavour to improve her favours. We have been flattered by the congratulations of some of the leading families of this place, and encouraged by the assurance of their patronage. I have engaged a small house for our accommodation—small, but neat, and suited to our present circumstances. It was not my intention to have married until Midsummer, but Mrs. Elliston was compelled to open her academy by August, and as the preparations required time, we have stolen this matrimonial march upon the expectation of our friends. This will also leave me at liberty to bring her with me to London, where I have engaged to perform for two or three nights, about the 24th of this month.

"It is unnecessary, I am sure, for me to add that I anxiously look to the opportunity of introducing this lady to you. I feel that I wait only your approval of my choice for the completion of a sense of happiness.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Your dutiful and affectionate nephew,

"R. W. ELLISTON.

"Chapel Row, 8th June, —96."

Nothing worthy particular remark signalized the wedding day, beyond the great event itself, except, indeed Miss Flemming appearing in the character of bride-maid—a part she went through in a state of mind not very unlike that of some heir-presumptive to a rich estate, who, having for twenty years been in the habit of looking on the reversion as inevitably his own, suddenly hears of the birth of a direct heir, leaving him in the *interesting* situation of 10,000*l.* borrowed on his expectancies. We may, perhaps, notice also the little coincidence of Foote's "Maid of Bath" being advertized in the bills of the night, in which Elliston himself played the part of *Major Racket.*

On the 25th of June, 1796, Elliston made his first appearance in London, at the Haymarket Theatre, in the part of *Octavian*, in the "Mountaineers;" and played on the same evening, *Vapour*, in the farce of "My Grandmother." On the ensuing morning, the following notices made also their appearance in the boards of the journals:—"This young performer had acquired considerable reputation from the reports of provincial theatres; and his claims are such, that, in our opinion entitle him to the favourable reception he has met with from a London audience. He appears to possess that first requisite to an actor—good conception of his character. Many passages in his performance of *Octavian* were marked by energy and feeling. His

pathos made a successful appeal to the hearts of the audience, and discovered powers beyond the common artifice of trick. His delivery in general was good, except that, when he was desirous of being impressive, he was occasionally too rapid. In *Vapour*, he disclosed some power of whim and humour."

Again—"Doctors differ, says the proverb, and it would be curious if critics were to agree. Some say that the new performer, Mr. Elliston, succeeded very well in *Octavian*, but was indifferent in *Vapour*. Others think that his *Vapour* was good, but his *Octavian* by no means successful. A critic, says Dean Swift, is like a dog at a feast—intent only on what the guests throw away. Admitting, therefore, that of these critics some were pleased with the tragedian, others with the comedian, there is not much wonder that, each in his capacity of critic, seized on what was bad in either of the performances, as their inclination directed."

Taking the various accounts given at the time, there can be no doubt that Elliston made a decided "hit" in the part of *Octavian*, and in all probability would have shot equally well in *Vapour*, but for this double aim of being successful in the two characters, before an entirely new audience. However confident he might have felt in his powers, the very temperament of the critic was to be dreaded; and it was not likely, whatever his claim might have

been, that equal and unqualified praise would have been his portion in this ambidextrous attempt. Nay, the very delight which the spectator might have felt in witnessing his former performance, was hostile to his chance in the latter, from the very unwillingness to disturb the first impression, of which the wax was scarcely set—like algebraic quantities, they might have destroyed each other. We remember to have heard an anecdote of a lady whose coachman suddenly discovered a wonderful knowledge of floriculture and the management of the conservatory, but on no account would she suffer him to touch a flower; it turned out, however, that he had passed nearly his whole life in the labour of nursery-grounds, and had scarcely once handled the reins before the first Sunday he drove her ladyship to church.

On the 28th, Elliston repeated *Octavian* to great applause and an overflowing audience, and on the 30th he appeared in the character of *Sheva*. His success in this part was undeniable. In the opinion of the journals, "no performer of better promise had presented himself in London for many years," and the Bath actor was, *sur le champ*, a confirmed favourite with the London public. These two parts, *Octavian* and *Sheva*, he alternately repeated for a few nights, according to agreement.

Early in July, Elliston resumed his professional duties at Bath, and within a week of his return, his benefit at Bristol took place, whereby he cleared

nearly one hundred pounds—a sum hitherto unprecedented in that city. On the 15th of the same month, he received the following flattering communication from Mr. Colman:—

"London, July 14, 1796.

"My Dear Sir,—I shall be very happy to see you again the moment your engagement will permit you to return. I will either defer settling terms till we meet, or fix them with you by letter. If you prefer the latter, pray propose, and nothing that I am able to effect shall be left undone to meet your wishes.

"*Octavian* and *Sheva*, you might, I am confident, repeat with increase of reputation to yourself, and advantage to the theatre. *Hamlet*, too, (of whom you seem a little afraid,) has nothing in the character which is not within your scope. If you fancy my hints can be of service to you in any part, I think they may be so in this, for I have been reading "Hamlet" with no small attention, on your account, since your departure. Believe me, whenever I may have anything to suggest, I shall manifest that freedom and friendship which I am most truly inclined to shew you.

"I am, my dear Sir, sincerely yours,

"G. Colman."

To this letter, so full of hope and encouragement, Elliston did not reply for several days; for not-

withstanding his recent anxiety to appear in London, and his great reception there, he still doubted whether it would not be wiser to remain in a place which had become so essentially his home. "Hors de Bath, point de salut," thought he.

In the meantime, he received a letter from Mr. Gore,* a gentleman who had long been on terms of great intimacy with the Elliston blood, which in respect of Robert William was not likely to be now invaded; as, above all things in life, the Captain's besetting passion was a play.

"Why have you not replied to Colman's letter?" says he; "you should not be too confident. Sense of security is mortals' frailty; and a man who has behaved so kindly to you as Colman, has a claim on your best attention. Believe me, you are mucn to blame. I see no reason why you should stand in awe of *Hamlet;* you have every qualification for it, except feature, and art may do much for you even in this. Dismiss all apprehension; and as at our Swedish game of '*Fer Herne*,' rush boldly forward, and win by daring. I would say to you as Cæsar did to the pilot, who was afraid to put to sea in a hurricane,—'Quid times? Cæsarem vehis!'

* Mr. and Lady Morris Gore resided chiefly at Bath, and were on the best terms with the Ellistons. Mr. Gore and his lady were sponsors for two children—Mr. Gore, for William Elliston, born 18th October, 1798; and Lady Morris Gore, for Frances Maria, born 13th August, 1800.

" Jack Bannister has recovered his politeness; after all, what I fancied coolness might really have been fancy. Cumberland and myself have met—we chatted together last Friday behind the scenes very freely, upwards of an hour. He talked much about you; and be not angry, that I praised you highly as a good son and honest man. Last night I was behind the scenes, at Colman's. Jack Bannister bowed again *en passant*, more coolly than he was wont to do. Perhaps he had heard of my attendance on you, and rooks will smell gunpowder. Charles Kemble asked very kindly after you; he seemed pleased to hear of your probable return this season. Waldron, the renowned *Sir Walter Raleigh*, rapped out some dozen oaths—swore 'by 'gad,' he could not have thought there was so much stuff in you—that, 'by 'gad,' you had taken them all in; and that you were an astonishing young man. He talked of Garrick, of whom, to his teeth, he knows no more than I of Sanconiatho. He said, too, he had heard you were engaged at Covent Garden, at 20*l.* a week. Then came the Apollo of the house, (Colman,) who asked me if I had received a letter from you? 'Oh, the rogue!' he replied; 'how can he neglect me so, when he knows I am so impatient to hear from him?'

" In the front of the theatre I met Reynolds; he told me he had finished another comedy for Harris, in which Lewis is to play *Harlequin*—'It is full of

stale jokes,' said he; 'and the characters cast in the same mould as the former ones—and as for plot, even the lying critics can't accuse me of stealing them from other people, for my plays have no plots at all.' This isn't being too partial to one's own—is it? There is much conversation stirring here on the death of Robert Burns; but honourable fame is imperishable. I cannot do better than dismiss my letter with a hint so useful."

On the 1st of August, Colman again wrote to Elliston, saying that he had actually announced him to appear at the Haymarket, in a few days. "Let us leave all terms to be arranged at our meeting," he observed; "I flatter myself you will not be dissatisfied with me."

It is clearly to be seen that Colman was extremely anxious Elliston should join him as soon as possible. In fact, he had a great and particular object at this moment in view—an object, which it was necessary for him at once to carry; and one which, though Elliston was to become the chief instrument, was as yet a secret to the actor, and known only but in the wary councils of the manager.

The patronage which George the Third graciously extended to the drama, and to the benefit of meritorious actors, should never be forgotten. In this summer (1796) Quick played nine nights at Windsor, of which the King commanded six!

CHAPTER IV.

The " Iron Chest"—Colman's " Preface"—Observations on his dispute with Kemble—Elliston studies *Sir Edward Mortimer* —Plays the part—His entire success—Reflections of the " Mirror"—The widow Collins—An original *Conservative*— Her eccentric letter—Sheridan's application to our hero— Another letter from the widow—Elliston plays *Philaster* at Covent Garden — Colman's renewed applications — Mrs. Elliston, a thriving wife—Elliston plays *Walter* with suc cess — " Seeing the world"—" The Court of Comus"— Club anecdotes—Cussans, a great oddity—Various anecdotes respecting him.

Most of our readers are aware of the untoward circumstances which attended the production of Colman's drama of "The Iron Chest"—that the essential incidents of the piece were taken from Goodwin's novel (" Caleb Williams")—that it was first represented at Drury Lane Theatre, in March, 1796— and that the event was disappointment and failure; on the cause of which, great diversity of public opinion was let loose, but on which the mind of the author was at least free from any embarrassment of doubt, as appeared by a " *Preface*" to the publica-

tion of the above—a production which, at the time, excited very general and animated attention.

The *genus irritabile vatum* is a zoological classification much older than the days of Cuvier or Humboldt, and the *delirium tremens* which tracks the propensity to write, is as certain as that which follows on an abandonment to drink. It is inseparable from both diseases, and clearly shews how wary men should be in contracting either. There never was a beauty who more complaisantly assented to her own charms, than an author to his; and it is not surprising, therefore, that when any literary creation—a drama, for instance—should fall short of the palpitating presage of its sponsor, he will look for the cause of it on the shores of China, or in the philosophy of Ptolemy, rather than have the least suspicion so lengthy a journey was altogether unnecessary.

That Mr. Colman might have had many grounds for regret, and some for complaint, the very subsequent success of this drama is a sufficient proof; but nothing surely could justify an attack on Mr. Kemble, which, for loud invective and an impudicious use of "local" language, (for the first time, then, the weapons of a gentleman,) is certainly entitled to its distinction of the "memorable." That a rhapsody so furious should seize on public attention was no matter of surprise; but attention may be engaged without approbation

making one of the party. We are amused at the fury of the man, rather than admire the science of the combatant, and are not with great difficulty led to believe that he who penned so impotent a piece of reasoning, might possibly have written a play not worth the acting.

No one has a greater veneration for the memory of Mr. Colman than ourselves; we bear it, with thousands, towards him as a dramatist, and we cherish it with the comparative few who knew him the charm of social life; how completely, therefore, should the character and station of Mr. Kemble have protected him from an assault, which might have been pardoned in a class less accomplished than that of Mr. Colman, and in whose coarser perceptions such outpourings might have been accounted masterly!

At no epoch of the drama were writers more indebted to actors than the time at which Colman wrote, and none of them more so than Mr. Colman himself. We would detract nothing from the merits of "John Bull," or the "Heir at Law;" but we do mean to congratulate the reputation of the author that these plays were produced at this genial period—a time in which, when contracting a debt of gratitude to the talent of the profession generally, he should long have deliberated before offering a public insult to the first and greatest of the order.

The cause of the dispute itself we do not enter

into—its interest passed away with the moment that begot it; satisfied we are that no provocation can acquit Mr. Colman of doing either violence to his friend or injustice to himself—a dispute in which, as he was not nice in respect of implements of offence, it is the more mournful that he should have been without a triumph—for triumph this was none, except with those who, like himself, could mistake fury for argument, and "calling names" for the pungency of satire.

Mr. D'Israeli, in noticing the infirmities of genius, gives the following pointed illustration of self-applause in the case of Kepler, which, mutatâ parte, might be here applied. "I dare insult," cries the astronomer, "the whole world, by confessing that I am he who has turned science (a novel) into advantage (a play). If I am pardoned, I shall rejoice—if blamed, I shall endure it. The die is cast. I have written this book ('Preface!'), and whether it be read by posterity, or by my cotemporaries, is of little consequence—it can well wait for readers during one century, when God himself, during six thousand years, has not sent an observer (a dramatist) like myself!"

No sooner was Elliston safe in Colman's hands, than the manager disclosed his purpose—namely, the resuscitation of "*Sir Edward Mortimer*," in the person of *Robert Elliston*.* Having taken some

* Many were the poetic germinations on the Colman and

liberties with Mr. Colman's preface, we must now, in justice to the drama itself, pursue its history to the close.

The "Mirror," a great theatrical authority of the time, had pronounced this play beyond all hope; that it was a very defective piece of work, and under no circumstances could possibly make a permanent stand. But the experiment Colman was resolved to make;—the magic lamp he was determined to possess, and on looking round for a fit instrument to his project, fixed on the young "*Aladdin*" he had purposely enticed to London. Elliston was of an ardent but not a presumptuous temper. "*Hamlet*" he had regarded with becoming diffidence of his immature powers, and the proposition now made to him of rescuing from the very grave a subject which the faculty had pronounced beyond all cure, and emphatically given over by the great *Paracelsus* himself, inspired him with no slight sensations of fear.

Having played *Octavian* on the 12th of August, and repeated it on the 22nd, he resumes his correspondence with his uncle:—

"Here am I once more in the metropolis, and have again paid my respects to a London audience, by whom I have been received with renewed—with in-

Kemble case—the best, perhaps, a quotation from the Roman Satirist—

"——— populus me sibilat; at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi, simul ac nummos contemplor in *Arcâ*."

creased demonstrations of welcome. Colman's 'Iron Chest,' which has made some noise in the dramatic world, is published, and with it a 'Preface,' or a *prescription*, which the author no doubt intended for Kemble's malady. You will be much diverted with it. The 'Iron Chest' is now to be performed at the Haymarket, and I am fixed on to take the character of *Sir Edward Mortimer*. It is thought by many a bold attempt, but by none more so than myself. If this succeeds, it will do greatly for me; if it fails, the blame will remain where the public voice has already declared it—on the play and the author. Young Bannister, eaten up with spleen, has positively refused my repeating *Sheva*, which he claims his unalienable own; and as I do not think it prudent to perform *Hamlet*, or indeed anything I could not confidently offer to the public, I am at a stand. The 'Iron Chest' engages all my attention—I am already in the stirrup of my purpose—wish me, dear sir, success."

The morning of the 29th arrived. Never had Elliston felt himself more depressed, not even when at Hull he believed himself abandoned by his revered relative. Bannister had not treated him kindly of late,—the words of a respectable journal, speaking of Elliston's *Sheva*, rankled, perhaps in his memory—"We may set it down as one of the first exhibitions of the day,"—so that Elliston began almost to sour at that success which had

purchased him the "slings and arrows" of distempered friends. He remembered Colman's words, "A new play redoubles the hazard to a new actor." How disheartening, therefore, had become his present chance! He almost fancied this manager-author was sacrificing him to the desperate hope of his own extrication. The state of his nerves was something like that of a young barrister on the first day of term, having "to move" in a court as yet unconscious of his accents. A thousand times did he wish the "new trial" were already granted.

A full house and loud encouragement greeted the appearance of the Haymarket *Sir Edward*, which, like the first shot in the field, freed his spirit from its bondage, and he entered gallantly on the fight. The experiment was adequate to the purpose—Colman's object was fully accomplished, and Elliston's fame in a considerable degree advanced. The play met with success—the chief performer with approbation and applause,—and from that moment the "Iron Chest" became a stock-piece in the acting drama!

The "Mirror" now found itself in an awkward predicament. Fain would it still declare, "No looking-glass was half so true!" but its face became not a little wavy, and gave a somewhat distorted line to the features, like some of those cheap glasses which hang about the neighbourhood of Drury Lane.

The "Mirror"—a Kemble reflector—had hitherto represented Elliston also in rather showy colours; but now, although brighter hues were before it, it had been breathed upon by some interest or other which materially dimmed its surface. But Elliston, who by this time had himself manifested sundry inclinations for "taking another glass," was constrained for a moment to accept the goods the *gods* provided. The paragraph is curious:—"Had Mr. Kemble played *Mortimer* infinitely better than he did, the 'Iron Chest' would, nevertheless, have been condemned at *Drury Lane.*" (It has been acted at Drury Lane a hundred times since with success.) "Had Mr. Elliston not played half so well as he did, the 'Iron Chest' would have been successful at Mr. Colman's *own theatre.*" (The insinuation is clear; the charge easily made; but does the history of the piece for forty years bear out the assertion? Had its success been the work of "*claqueurs*," the pages of the "Iron Chest" had long since gone to the trunkmakers.)

Elliston, of course, transmits the earliest intelligence to his uncle. "I have played this part," he says, "at a fortnight's notice; and the 'Iron Chest,' by the spirited exertions of the performers, has been entirely successful. For myself, I feel I have been equal to many of the points, but know, at the same time, my deficiency in others. This I must endeavour to supply. Our author is de-

lighted—talks of a very great triumph; nor do his looks belie him. I am, consequently, in high favour—too high to remain long on the wing."

The "Iron Chest" was acted every evening, from the 29th to the last of the season, with the exception of those appointed for actors' benefits. For his own "night," Elliston played *Romeo*—a free benefit, by which he cleared 204*l.*

But not merely with the young and ardent, to whom novelty is as the very dayspring of existence, had Elliston become an object of interest, but he shared also the regard of those in whom passion is said to wait on the judgment, and sobriety to reprove the whispers of imagination.

Of that mature class to which Bath had long been a haven and a refuge, was a Mrs. Collins, a widow lady, who, having here buried her husband three years since, with whom she had lived in tolerable peace for full thirty, was content to make the experiment of her viduity in the same place which had yielded her so fair an average of connubial profit.

Mrs. Collins was a respectable, well-meaning woman; though sometimes falling into errors to which good intentions are notoriously prone. She had, however, one peculiarity, which, as it ran into extremes, we fear we must place in the catalogue of sins; and this was, that she never destroyed, parted with, or lost sight of anything

which had ever once passed into her possession. Not that she was a niggard: on the contrary—she was liberal with her means and generous in her sentiments, but she was incurably possessed with the acervatic spirit of *hoarding*. Neither note, slip, scrap, bill, nor account had she ever sentenced to the flame: however trivial the document, however perished the occasion, the senseless record was still enrolled in her "*Cottonian*" Museum. "Mr. Jones will see Mr. Fitz Simons at two o'clock this day," she had already preserved for twenty years; prospectuses of schemes never carried into effect; shop cards of parties long since in the "Gazette;" London Directories previous to the days of Wilkes, and hallowed almanacks nearly coeval with herself. Saddles and stoves, frames of pictures and remnants of carpet; locks of doors and stoppers of decanters; injured Daphnes, and noseless Strephons; spectacle-cases and snuffer-stands; boot-hooks and bell-wires; old turnpike-tickets and wine-corks; cataplasms of a relative who died of a gangrene, and the residue of Mr. Collins' medicine in his last illness.

This well-saved heterogeneous mass, occupying sundry attics, and yielding but little rent, the good widow at stated periods deemed it necessary to overhaul and examine. Taking stock in an extensive retail concern was a trifle to this job—it was her occupation for days—the whole went

through the operation of fresh pepper for preservation, and new labels for inventory; and according to Elliston, who was ever mightily amused with the original, she had actually an old jack-weight brought once a-year before the kitchen fire, to be well aired and made comfortable with the other articles.

With this besetting propensity to conservation, it may be supposed that she guarded with Papistic zeal every relic of her sainted husband. There was his wig, his hat, his walking-stick, and every thread and button that had encased his perishable form. In fact she had saved all things but him.

These, of course, were admitted, at stated periods, to the healthier participation of light and air; and on the saint-days set apart for this holy observance, the looker-on might have been well excused for his uncharitable misgivings, in viewing the widow's chamber strewn with the apparel of a man, or dangling from a hempen line, "in the same figure of the king that's dead," and whispering to his imagination the terrific legend of the "Widow of Ephesus."

But these eccentricities destroyed not the more sterling quality of Mrs. Collins. She had the interest of her young friends really at heart. Mrs. Elliston she always valued, and Robert William she sometimes admonished. This she did occasionally by letter; and though we do not consider her grave exhortations so necessary to our readers, as the

object to whom she addressed them, we cannot refrain from giving one or two examples, which constitute, in fact, so positive a part of the history of our subject itself.

The following characteristic epistle Elliston received before leaving Bath—addressed "Milsom Street:"—

"I am always in *terror*, my dear young friend, when I hear you are to dine at the houses of *those* who love to *push the bottle*, and think robbing persons of their *reason* is an evidence of *hospitality*. In this class is Sir J. Cope—and I deem it a kind of duty to let you into his *character*. Beware of going a second time to the 'Harmonic' with a head full of *discord*. I heard, with concern, the *dispute* you got into; but forbore defending you to Mrs. E., lest *she* might really have heard *nothing of the matter*. When your enemies (*for so they are*) would lead you *astray*, repeat to them your own constant expression, '*professional people should be cautious*.' What is become of Mr. Foote? Pray let me know if he is to perform *again*—I have a particular wish to see him, *because* he was recommended to Mrs. C. Brownlow by Colonel Greville.

"Your faithful friend, A. C.

"P.S. The benefit tickets which were *not used* I have *put by*."

Not many days after the first representation of the "Iron Chest," at the Haymarket, Elliston received offers from both Mr. Harris and Mr. Sheridan. The latter gentleman, having appointed to breakfast with him, was so far true to his engagement, but arrived in Frith Street at a quarter before six o'clock, P.M., just seven hours after the time that had been named. Sheridan, however, immediately entered on the business of his mission, and appeared extremely anxious to see this new meteor under the dome of Drury Lane Theatre; but Elliston, a newly married man, his wife settled at Bath, in partnership with Miss Flemming under a bond of 500*l.*, and himself the paramount favourite as an actor in the same place, was not easily persuaded to the project.

He therefore made such proposals to Sheridan as he pretty well knew could not be acceded to—namely, 1000*l.* to be paid down—the forfeit sum of his articles with Dimond, the penalty of the bond in respect of his wife, "and in conclusion," a large weekly salary for his own professional exertions. Besides which, his preference would have been decidedly in favour of Covent Garden, as he fancied better security for payment would be there forthcoming—a consideration which we trust our readers will deem reasonable enough. The result was, that Mr. Harris proved the successful bidder—his proposal being that Elliston should play twelve nights

in the course of the season; to receive 200*l.*; and in the event of his being found greatly attractive, to be paid an adequate additional sum.

In the meantime our new acquaintance, Mrs. Collins, again addresses him. Like Mr. Gore, she was a nice observer of manners, and, like him, passionately fond of the drama:—

"Ashley Grove, August 19, 1797.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I have heard with pleasure from *sweet Mrs. Elliston*, who *kindly* enclosed a paragraph from the "*Oracle*," which gave me *infinite satisfaction*. As you request me to become your *monitress*, I do not think I should discharge the trust *faithfully*, unless I were to transmit my sentiments as you may give occasion for them, lest by *delay* they might be *too late* to be *useful*. I have been perusing the part of *Colonel Fainwell*, with much attention—and it strikes me as *one* calculated to portray your powers and versatility, to *great advantage*.

"But, on a subject infinitely of *greater importance*, (no less, my young friend, than the preservation of your *health and morals*,) it now behoves me to say a *few words*. You will readily believe I wish you to consult Mr. C.* on *theatricals* ONLY. Avoid being led by *him* into *convivial parties*, which may be ruinous to your *purse*, and, above all, to

* Colman.

your *peace of mind*. Be wary of *him* when the *play-house doors are shut!* Of his *abilities* I think *highly*, and therefore wish you to talk with him on your performing *Belcour* and *Don Felix* on the *stage of the theatre;* but on the *stage of life*, have as little to do with any of them *as possible*. I am pleased to hear you are to appear in *Walter*. You outshone *Bannister* in *Sheva*, and may do no less in *Walter*. If it be *practicable*, I will attend on *your night* at the Haymarket, therefore let me have your *bill of fare*.

"In a *few hours*, I set off for *Bath*, where I hope to find *Mrs. Elliston* and my pretty *god-daughter** well.

"Believe me, my dear friend, your *faithful* well-wisher. "ANNE COLLINS."

"To Mr. Elliston,
Frith Street, Soho, London."

On the 21st of September, 1797, Elliston made his debut on Covent Garden stage, in the part of *Sheva*. His observant friends had long confirmed the opinion of Tate Wilkinson—namely, that too frequently he had wanted power, and they were consequently not without some apprehension that he might not be fully successful in so large a theatre. But in himself he had better confidence; the hint he had taken wisely, and had so cherished

* Eliza, Elliston's first child, born at Bath, May 22, 1797.

the very necessary faculty to metropolitan excellence, that he opened new beauties in the impersonation of this character, and produced an effect that, while the most sanguine were taken by surprise, the backward and unwilling confessed he was indeed an actor. The night's receipt, amounting to 258*l.*, was welcome as summer to Mr. Harris; and on Elliston's repeating the part on the 28th, the amount was 300*l.*—on the following evening he acted the same character at Bristol!

On the 9th of October, after repeating *Sheva* at Covent Garden, the bills announced that the proprietors of the Bath Theatre had consented that Elliston should perform in London once in every fortnight throughout the season, and that his subsequent characters would be those of *Philaster* and *Don Felix*. On the 26th, he played *Douglas;* and on the 16th of November, Elliston acted *Sheva*, by command of their Majesties. On the 24th of the same month, he appeared in *Philaster*, in Beaumont and Fletcher's play of the same title, as altered for William Powell by the elder Colman in 1673.

On Elliston's being announced for *Douglas*, Colman writes a hasty note to him, saying, " I don't much admire this schoolboy, water-gruel *Douglas*—he will not advance you; and I am decidedly averse to *Don Felix*. I have more than hinted to Mr. Harris he should not run you out of wind.

Slowly and sure—they stumble who go fast.' *Philaster* should be a hit."

"Philaster" is a piece of bilious mosaic, compounded in a great measure of the ravings of *Hamlet*, the jealousy of *Othello*, and the turbulence of *Posthumus*—requiring a versatile abundance of mental and physical power, for a stage illustration of character. Elliston's success in *Octavian* and *Mortimer* suggested, no doubt, the probability of a "hit" in this new part; and though he seems to have aimed with good success in those passages wherein tenderness and suspicion alternately prevail, yet on the whole, it does not appear that *Philaster* was one of his triumphant undertakings. The receipt to "Philaster" was only 148*l.*—the play was not repeated, nor did Elliston's name appear in the Covent Garden bills after that occasion. He acted only seven nights, for which he received 200*l.*

Elliston again settled at Bath; Colman renews his correspondence with him:—

"All I shall observe," he says, "of your Covent Garden business is, that never was so promising a child so ill nursed. Your letter bears with it an air of disappointment; but you are so unused to checks, that trifles seem to upset you. I must see you fighting under my banner in the summer; but as you cannot be with me throughout the season, how can I, my dear Elliston, write a part

for you without injury to the theatre on the whole? I must apply whatever strength of authorship I have while you are away; and when you come to town, you in your own person, will be attractive in the old pieces. I am now deep in the business of a new comedy;* as far as I have proceeded, there is nothing which I think would suit you—it is all sock, not a shred of buskin—nor can I introduce anything likely to shew you off to advantage. The cut and dry you can still make palatable. I am for Macbeth! Open my booth on the 12th of June."

After some further correspondence, the Haymarket engagement being fixed, Elliston—as fond of rest as an armadillo—desirous, no doubt, of the *repose* attendant on a state of theatrical proprietorship, from what he had seen in Colman's affairs, proposed to himself no less than a similar indulgence.

Mr. Palmer, the principal shareholder of the Bath Theatre, had just served the office of mayor of that city, which he carried through in a most expensive and spirited manner, and was conjectured, at this moment, to be in want of money—this Elliston thought a good opportunity for endeavouring to effect a part purchase of the theatre. Measures were taken for this object, and his most

* This was the "Heir at Law."

conciliatory uncle agreed to advance the funds necessary. But Elliston's calculations appear to have been erroneously made: the offer was not entertained by the other parties; and although year after year he renewed his advances, yet his proposals were never accepted. When, however, the new theatre was building in 1805, he fancied himself sure of his object: his offers were not positively rejected, but so many obstacles were raised, that he finally abandoned the project altogether.

Mrs. Elliston—in all things a good example—gave pleasing indications of "Lucina's" favour, or in other words, of a thriving wife; and in the Master's consent, by letter, to become godfather to the daughter already born, he observes,—

"I had fancied the period arrived in which I should not again appear in the character to which you have invited me; and you may doubt the wisdom of your choice when, in all probability, before the damsel is able to reply to the first words of her catechism, I may not be found to put the question."

Elliston now took a spacious house in Pulteney Street, estimating that he should stand rent-free by letting off part of it—a calculation on which so many similar successes have been built, which, like fortunes made on the slate, appear at the outset so natural and easy.

Owing to the lateness of the Bath season, Ellis-

ton was not able to join the Haymarket company before the 9th of August, when he made his appearance in his favourite *Octavian*. His reception was highly gratifying. He seemed to have surmounted the prejudices even of the enthusiastic followers of Kemble in this part, and obtained credit for that which always charms—originality. The great improvement he had attained was, a certain energy which had before been wanting; for the taste of Elliston, at that time, had so little affinity with the vulgarity of rant, that he would not unfrequently rein up the impulse of passion whilst bounding to the goal of some powerful effect.

Having next played *Sir Edward Mortimer*, he appeared in the part of *Walter*, in " The Children of the Wood." Here Elliston had the same obstacles to contend with as in *Octavian*—namely, stepping into a character rendered singularly attractive by a living popular actor. Bannister had justly acquired a perfect command over the feelings of the auditor, in this part of *Walter:* his acting was natural, simple, yet deeply impressive; a part, also, in which he was constantly before the public. The stand, however, which the Bath actor made was greatly flattering.

" Elliston's *Walter* was only inferior to Bannister's because it did not precede it," said a great theatrical authority; but although the pathos of the

part was a material which he was expected successfully to deal with, perhaps he was somewhat too stilted for the impersonation of lowly and familiar scenes—*Difficile est communia dicere*"—it was the pathetic of tragedy, not comedy. This, like all Elliston's previous attempts, was no copy—confirming his reputation as an original actor.

Elliston, " the child of fortune," was now in a fair way of becoming a man of fortune—for not only was he making money, but what is more rare, he was saving it. The sensation, also, he had lately produced rendered him quite " the observed" of the gay metropolis, so that he was nearly as much courted by the *elegans* of London as he had been at Bath itself.

But London affords a vast variety of scenes to lads of metal, other than the halls of science, or the chambers of the polite—many places which young men, not absolutely " content to dwell in decencies for ever," would just like to *witness once!*—scenes which, being fortunately hidden from the world, and loving darkness rather than light, are sometimes sought under the most curious plea which was perhaps ever advanced—namely, of *seeing the world!* Thus your " good sort of man," stroking his boy's forehead, observes, " The lad should see everything, that he may know what to avoid!"—in other words, " We will lose no time in making

him acquainted with folly; so that, if he never acquire anything else, he shall at least be accomplished in that."

The poet indeed says—

> "Vice is of that hideous mien,
> Which to be hated, needs but to be seen;"

and historians tell us that the antique Spartans would make their helots drunk, for the purpose of deterring the nobler born from so degrading a vice; but the first, being poetry, is "licensed to deal" in that commodity by which it can alone grow rich, namely, fiction; and the tendency of the latter is so far disproved by modern experience, that we doubt whether the sight of a hundred reeling footmen would admonish a single master, or teach him a better lesson, than "as drunk as a lord."

But to proceed: there existed at this period (1797), as now, in the neighbourhood of the theatres, certain conventions, yclep'd "clubs," which, though not containing the peculiar essence of Will's, or the precise quality of Button's, had yet an essence and quality of their own. Here was no narrow eligibility or invidious proscription; "order," in fact, under every denomination, was totally irrecognisable—their doors, like a box of charity, were open to the whole world, *pro hâc nocte*, on the payment of sixpence. These were frequented chiefly by a class of persons who had but one plan in life,

which was, to give over work the first moment they had earned enough to get drunk for the remainder of the week.

One of the principal establishments of the above kind was the " Court of Comus," which had laid its foundations in Wych-street, whereof a certain choice spirit of the name of Desborough was rated to the poor; or in other words, the landlord. This Desborough, as dull a rogue on most points as any in Christendom, was yet famous by a kind of concentration of genius, the light whereof became more vivid by the illimitable stupidity by which it was encircled. This outrageously stupid man was famous, in fact, for doing *one* thing well—well! surpassing, in sooth, any effort of the " Court of Comus" itself—and this was, singing Dibdin's song of " Fortune's Wheel!"

Stupid Desborough was, indeed, so far before all rivalry in this song, that Charles Dibdin actually sought him out, with another tap-room *Apollo*, known as Dick Mason, to give him assistance in his musical olios. Desborough most hopelessly failed in everything but " Fortune's Wheel;" as for poor Dick, he succeeded in nothing.

This sort of monophlox, or single flash, is a curious fact in histrionic research, for there is no actor perhaps so obscure but can produce some one little part by which he is rescued from absolute non-entity, and in which he leaves all competition far,

far behind him. Of this sort, we recollect to have heard of a certain ill-favoured wench in Sussex, who, though wofully wanting in mental, constitutional, and personal qualities, yet excelled the whole sisterhood of the county in the composition of a beef-steak pudding. This solitary accomplishment rendered her illustrious—procured for her a hale, strapping yeoman to take her to church, who allowed her forthwith but little opportunity for improving any other faculty.

But to return to the "Court of Comus." Precisely at nine o'clock p.m. by the chimes of St. Clement Dane, the doors of this sanctuary were thrown open to devotees, (who, like crabs, moved only at night,) and the "Flamen" of the sanded floor (Cussans) ascended the curule chair, before whom a pickled herring, some strong waters, and an ounce of tobacco, were regularly placed.

This celebrated youth was the son of an opulent West Indian, and educated at Marylebone school—an indubitable genius; but like farmer Ashfield's horse of that name, "he would never work." Cussans had, in fact, many opportunities of mixing in the best society, but the company he preferred to *mix with* was a cordial far more suited to his taste.

> "A lion cub, of sordid mind,
> Avoided all the lion kind;
> He loved the cellar's vulgar joke,
> And pass'd his hours in ale and smoke."

Cussans lodged at a baker's, as it afforded him the means of getting in at any hour of the four-and-twenty, except on Saturdays, when he never went home at all. Sims, another lad, hopeful as young *Filch* himself, occupied one room of a tenement in Dark-House Lane, the door of which, for the sake of light and air, had not been shut for forty years; and Hawtin, the trumpeter and *stone-eater*, with one Smith, a glass-eyed clarionet-player, constituted the "leaders" in the "Court of Comus."

On Cussans taking the chair, the official club cocked-hat, resembling very nearly that of Billy Waters, was handed to him by the serjeant-at-arms, Sims; and the moment he placed it on his head, "the kettle to the trumpet spake," and the court was declared sitting.

The first thing, as we have heard, was "Fortune's Wheel." Then the renowned Cussans, the court improvisatore, gave a *canzona*, in which, with some ability, he identified each visitor present; afterwards, in turn, every one present was separately called on to "*do something.*" This "doing something" was imperative, except, indeed, that indulgences and absolutions might be purchased; but these, though always marketable, were placed considerably beyond the reach of the generality of sinners, the price for each being half-a-crown. "Doing something" implied either a song, a

speech, poising a tobacco-pipe or coal-skuttle; an imitation of cat, dog, or fowl, posturizing, or the more classic feat of quaffing to the dregs the pewter Amystis* of some potent compound.

"Qui canerent agerentque peruncti fæcibus ora."

Each actor had his turn, and each effort its short pre-eminence, till drink alone was triumphant, which, like the sole survivor of the fray, claimed the mown field its own.

On gala nights, Cussans, as the clock struck twelve, from a god, descended, like Jupiter himself, into a beast,—not, indeed, as a rampant bull, but as a *dancing bear!* The scene of riot was thus conducted:—Sims, the bear-leader, beating the bottom of a pewter pot with a marrow-bone, threw a lasso about the loins of Cussans, now rolling in the sand, whilst Hawtin and Smith accompanied the exhibition with other signs and sounds fitting the occasion. The belluine judge, nobly sustaining his part, which, like *Snug*, the joiner, he might "do extempore, for it was nothing but roaring," danced, whirled, evoluted, till the poor excitement which drunkenness had produced left him at length as lifeless as an unburied corse.

"Man differs more from man than man from beast."

* "Amystis," a capacious cup, which to drain off at one breath was accounted a glorious piece of drunken Greek valour. —See *Hor.*, *Ode* xxxvi. lib. i.

The insane exploits of Cussans would occupy a volume, which as we by no means meditate, we dismiss him with one further anecdote, to shew the keenness of his perception. On one of these occasions, when each spectator had been called on to " do something," an extremely well-attired spectator, who had taken his place in the vicinity of a person, evidently a stranger, was about commencing some characteristic " agendum," when up rose the presiding Cussans himself, and thus addressed the assembly :—

" By the rules of this institution, each individual is called on to do something whereby he proves himself worthy a seat in this fraternity. The gentleman before me has already passed a most creditable examination, and is entitled to exalted honours, for, if I mistake not, his neighbour, on making an appeal to his coat-pocket, will find a snuff-box missing, which, perhaps, the *Count Fathom* in my eye may be able to account for."

It is needless to add, this address produced the desired effect, and the pickpocket was forthwith kicked out of court, a punishment which, in the judgment of those present, he richly deserved ; not for the strength of the theft, but, like the Spartan lad, for his weakness of concealment.

In his idiosyncrasy, Cussans had also a singular and conceited regard for his word of promise. This, whether given under a false representation from

others; forced at the very point of the bayonet, or filched from him in the moment (the many hours!) of intoxication, he still invariably regarded. Having been reminded that, on one of these occasions, he had promised to hire himself as a pot-boy to a neighbouring house of call for wits, he actually entered on the ignoble service, at the "Red Lion," in Russell-street, for one entire month, at the expiration of which, he gave notice to his retainers that a "Lodge" would be open at the "Court of Comus." The procession of his manumission quitted the blushing lion at a certain hour—Sims, Hawtin, and others, occupying the interior of a hackney-coach, and Cussans, *ipsissimus*, in a harlequin party tire, perched on the roof—Desborough preceding, and, of course, singing "Fortune's *Wheel!*"

On another occasion, a review of troops taking place in Hyde Park, before the King and Prince of Wales, Cussans procured a military uniform and charger, and having effected his way on the ground, actually joined the royal party as they were passing along the line. The distinguished stranger attracted presently universal attention, his mock-heroic aspect and imperturbability of deportment bade defiance to the gravity of the whole staff, and shook the nerves of as gallant a brigade as ever entered the field

Cussans was also a considerable actor; he played frequently at Sadler's Wells, generally choosing

Sneak, in the "Mayor of Garratt," as he was much celebrated in the character song of "*Oh! Poor Robinson Crusoe!*" In this song, he had as many "encores" as he pleased; and on a certain evening, having sang it three or four times, the curtain drew up for another part of the night's entertainment, when, to the astonishment, but still greater delight, of the Sadler's Wells' auditory, Cussans started up from the very centre of the shilling gallery, vigorously singing "Oh! poor Robinson Crusoe!" nor would the *Wellsites* suffer the drama to proceed till he had again sang it twice from the same spot.

Poor Cussans! brandy was his death, and water his grave; for he died on his voyage to a softer climate, and was buried in the deep.

Such were the "clubs"—such the "Court of Comus!"—*ex uno*, &c., and such was the place (we confess it with a blush) where Robert William, oblivious of dear Mrs. Collins, "when the playhouse doors were shut," satisfied his young curiosity. Shaking his plumes from the encumbrance of rule, and unbuckling the heavy breastplate of decorum—here, amongst the "free and easy," we track the footsteps of our adventurous hero, but (as the "bills" express it) "for this night only"—at least, we hope so—and will therefore leave him to all the gratification the adventure can afford.

CHAPTER V.

An unexpected meeting—Elliston a critic—Widow Collins again—Elliston a public lecturer—"The Artichoke"—Earl of Harcourt—His Lordship's letter to Mrs. Elliston—Observations on Elliston's "Charles Surface"—Sheridan's note—the Duchess of Devonshire—Two letters of Lord Harcourt—Elliston plays before the King—A royal fête at Frogmore—A curious adventure with Davis, the pugilist—Remarkable anecdote of George III.

By one of those fortuities which render truth sometimes stranger than fiction, the unhappy parents of our hero, between whom, it will be remembered, a separation had taken place many months before, were now brought, face to face, *tout à coup*, in the small back parlour of a chemist's shop, in Somers Town.

A crowd had collected before the glazed door, owing to a person having been carried within who had a few minutes before fallen down in a fit. The good mother, passing at the time, being well known to the compounder of drugs, gained ready admittance; and prompted by something better than

curiosity, approached the unfortunate sufferer just as he was "coming to." No sooner had she fixed her eyes on the object in question, than the epileptic shock seemed instantaneously conveyed by contact with the patient, and clasping her hands, she faintly exclaimed, "Robert!" and sank on a chair beside him. The one was the *horloger*, Elliston himself, and the good Samaritan no other than his faithful helpmate, whose affection for her husband neglect had never weakened nor separation estranged.

But this rencontre was destiny rather than chance, or "chance, direction, which they could not see;" for being thus brought together, a renewal of conjugal rights was the result; and a cottage, in the neighbourhood of Bath, was taken and furnished for the aged couple—the expenses of which, young Elliston, with some assistance from the Doctor, cheerfully engaged to defray. The old lady, however, did not long enjoy the comfort thus provided —she died in November, 1798.

On Elliston's return to Bath, in 1799, he found his father in a very alarming state, who was therefore immediately removed from the cottage to his son's house, where he lingered till the June of the following year, and then expired. The fact was, both mother and son had gone through much vexation and painful trouble on the watchmaker's account. Drink had sadly disordered Nature's works;

and the time-piece, man, was no more. If his amiable mate had ever found him a blessing, he was, beyond all question, a blessing in disguise, for he was seldom sober. So, in his age, like the old eagle, he lived only on suction—it was both his malady and his medicine.

> " Si nocturna tibi noceat potatio vini,
> Hanc tu mane bibas iterum, et fuerit medicina."

As a proof of Elliston's sincere and attentive devotion to his art, at this period of his career, it should be noticed that he was in the habit of drawing up an analysis of each part previous to his first appearance therein. For a brief example, we give an extract of his view of the character of *Panglos*.

" It is no uncommon thing to find men of letters courting the hand of power or fortune, by descending to meannesses which an independent mind would shudder at. Knowledge, it would be supposed, should fortify the mind to bear disappointments and meet the casualties of life with firmness, but no sooner does the gripe of poverty bind us, than we frequently forget the theorems which have convinced us in books, and altogether discard our philosophy in practice. In this state is the subject of our present contemplation. He continues with few or no attempts to release himself from the caprice and insults of his employers, and his conscience is presently reconciled to his interest. His

quotations are not unnatural and irresistibly laughable, and we forgive his vanity for the sake of the mirth it causes. We are not elated at his success, because he has not deserved it. His reverse of fortune we behold with indifference, because his nature is not deeply vitiated.

"Comic characters are seldom analyzed in their moral features; we laugh at singularities, without regarding their tendency, which may possibly be bad. The oddity of *Panglos*, his pedantry and cringing, all combine to make him ridiculous; but the author has done good dramatic justice; for, while we find the Doctor amusing, to answer the cause of theatrical entertainment, he is left contemptible, as a lesson to take home with us."

Happy should we have been to leave undisturbed the good impression which no doubt our hero has made on our readers, by this example of professional diligence; but, as faithful historians, we are compelled now to present them with a letter, which may possibly raise more than a suspicion of his fallibility, and call to mind those sundry airy securities for good behaviour which in 1792 he showered on his confiding uncle, and made us tremble, at the time, for his liabilities. The epistle is from the *conservative* Mrs. Collins, who, from the storehouse of her affection, supplies the following admonition—the exigency of which occasion will be explained by the tenour of her words.

"I received your packet, my dear young friend, with mingled sentiments of *concern* and *satisfaction*. If I ever mentioned to Mrs. E. the report of your being an *unsteady husband*, it was to weaken the blow of her being a *deceived wife*—for these latter reports are flying about like *musquitoes*. For myself, I have *ever* considered you incapable of *studied deception;* and the affectionate zeal with which she has *often* spoken of your *unabating tenderness*, I would not for the world disturb.

"That you are really *in debt*, I never have believed; *but* that you *go the way* to become in debt, I *do believe*, because I *know it*—know that you *play*—*gamble*—know that you have visited the *hazard table*—thank God, I do not believe it is *yet* a HABIT. But it is in dread of *this* that I now write—when *once* the *habit* is confirmed—when once this idle *pleasure* has ripened into *passion*, you are lost to any hope which *this world* can give of your own preservation; whilst the pang that event will inflict on you, will be a *hundredfold* repeated in the knowledge that you are the *curse* instead of the *blessing* to innocent hearts, who now look up to you alone for shelter, and for *whose moral nature* you are *also responsible*.

"The reports that '*young Elliston is a gambler*,' have already reached *Mr. Gore;* I therefore recommend you to take an early opportunity, *not* of *denying* these, if they be true, but of *breaking the*

vicious bonds while yet they are *within* your strength. What have I heard! that even between the *scenes* of the very *playhouse*—frequently in your *dressing-room* there—you gamble in *some shape* or other. Can such things fail of *notoriety?* and will notoriety have any tenderness for the ears of your *inestimable wife?* 'I say again, Take heed!' and believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"ANNE COLLINS.

"P.S.—I hope you have not forgot to thank Lady Perth for her letters to the north in *your behalf;* and Mr. Ashe thinks it would be right for you to call on Mr. Duff, who addressed his sister, Lady Ann, and several others, for you. You may find out her abode at the *Pump Room.*"

This letter was unequivocally to the point; as Elliston secretly confessed, not without abundant reason. He first made an attempt at some display at indignation on reading it, but, like Jonathan Wild, who, when thrust to sea alone, in an open boat, cocked his hat and looked fierce for a moment, and then recollected there was no one by to applaud him, so did our hero think better of his anger, and pocketing the affront, vowed there was no real happiness but what conscience approved; and so passed that evening in the full enjoyment of domestic virtue.

In the midst of these things—the analysis, one moment, and the dice, another—schemes of theatrical partnership, and sudden excursions of pleasure, —Elliston made his appearance as a public lecturer!

During the Lent season of this year, 1798, he undertook a series of lectures, both at Bath and Bristol, on morals and general criticism—it was a kind of "Blair," "Kames," and *Elliston* partnership, in which the moralist and the critic, pleasantly impregnated with the popular actor, drew together very profitable assemblies at both cities, and ended greatly to the success of this new enterprise. Poor Mrs. Collins! what a letter would she have written —how emphatically scored each alternate word— had she heard the malicious anecdote which for a time prevailed on the termination of these academic displays!

It was on a certain evening, at the ancient city of Bristol, after our adventurous scholiast had delivered himself, "ore rotundissimo," on the *Life and Genius of Bishop Berkley*, and having left his enraptured audience with the words of Pope, "To Berkley every virtue under heaven!" that, having pocketed the proceeds of his spiritual exercise, amounting to no less than thirty-six pounds, he carried the same to a house of riot, known in those days as the "Artichoke," scattering the profits of so much godliness amidst "Bates, Dawson, and the rest:" when returning to Bath with his despised

friends—namely, his own reflections,—he was met with a smile of confidence and affection, which, though in value beyond all human price, stung him in the keenest vibration of his heart.

Some few months previous to these events, Elliston had discovered the mistake in his calculation of the Pulteney-street establishment. He found that bringing a large house "over his head" was as destructive as an "old one,"—part of it had never once been occupied at all, and his tenant for another, had absconded, with a month's rent yet unsatisfied, and a few pounds to boot, borrowed from his landlord in the hurry of some business, by which any gentleman may be surprised. Elliston and his family had now taken up their residence in Bathwick-street.

It was about this period Elliston became known to the Earl of Harcourt, a nobleman of unostentatious friendliness and refined taste, enjoying the favour of the sovereign, and dispensing patronage and encouragement to British art under every denomination.

The Earl's father had been nominated ambassador extraordinary to the court of Mecklenburgh Strelitz, to demand the Princess Charlotte in marriage for George III.: he lost his life by a lamentable accident—falling into a well in his own park at Nuneham, and was succeeded by George Simon, the subject of our present notice. This nobleman was

a great patron of the stage and its professors; the Kemble family shared his especial favour, and many actors of merit his notice and regard. To Elliston and his wife he was most friendly; and whilst his position enabled him to be highly beneficial in their professional pursuits, his enlightened mind and mature judgment supplied them frequently with the best counsel.

The two following are among the earliest of Lord Harcourt's letters—the first addressed to Mrs. Elliston.

"Nuneham, April 6th.

"MADAM,—As it cannot but be gratifying to you to hear the opinion of a good judge of acting, and who is himself an excellent comedian, respecting Mr. Elliston's performance of *Charles*, I will not deny myself the pleasure of transcribing a paragraph from a letter I received this morning. The approbation of a few such judges, is of far higher value than the plaudits of an unreflecting multitude, for such, I fear, must all multitudes be considered.

"'*Charles* was better performed by Elliston than by Smith—at least, in my opinion. Smith I never really liked in the part. It was a relief to me not to see the chair leaned upon, &c. &c. Elliston looks the character admirably. Lord St. Helens was as much pleased as myself, who, never having seen O'Brien, thinks Elliston the first gentleman on the stage—he has an easy vivacity and a spiritual

quality which no other performer possesses—a charming voice, and his side acting is admirable.'

"If your affection, madam, has some satisfaction from reading this eulogy, my own vanity is gratified while I write it, as I take to myself the credit of having discovered Mr. Elliston's peculiar talent in much earlier days than the present. The annals of the stage record two gentlemen actors only—viz., Wilkes, in the time of Cibber and Mrs. Oldfield, and O'Brien in that of Garrick, which last-named, with all his astonishing powers both in tragedy and comedy, could be anything—everything —except a gentleman.

"I am, Madam, your humble servant,

Who the correspondent of Lord Harcourt really was, does not appear; but we by no means call on our readers to subscribe implicitly to his opinion of Elliston's personification of *Charles Surface*. In our own humble impression, *Charles* was not amongst his most successful efforts; and we the more regret this, as it was no doubt, the dazzle, of this character which led Elliston away from *Joseph*—a part which he ought to have made most triumphantly his own,

and but for the other attraction most probably would have done so.

That he played *Charles* charmingly, no one can deny; but his transcendent merit therein is at least equivocal. *Joseph Surface* is perhaps the most difficult part in comedy on the stage, to sustain with effect—to make what is called a hit, is next to impossible. Here are no points—no strong situations which sometimes command applause; all that can be done must be accomplished by sound, intrinsic acting. The character is introduced by neither flower nor flourish—the mere "good morrow" are the simple words committed to him. You sympathize with him for not one moment in the play,—for he is no bold-faced villain, who will sometimes beguile the spectator of a transient impulse of pity or applause—he is detested throughout, on whose shoulders the airy fascination of *Charles* is borne sparkling to the close; and yet, with all this, is *Joseph* the hero of the play—a question which the inimitable Palmer satisfactorily proved; and a fact which Elliston, in that peculiar quality of his art which so distinguished him, ought still to have maintained and perpetuated.

The second letter is to Elliston himself—the subject of it appears to have been his own benefit.

"Nuneham, April 24th.

"LORD HARCOURT sends his compliments to Mr. Elliston, and assures him that he has great pleasure

in communicating to him the enclosed letter from Mr. Smith. He thinks it would be more correct and respectful towards their R.R.H.H., the Duke and Duchess of York, to advertise the play to be performed by their command, than under their patronage. No one, except Mr. Elliston himself, need know that their R.R.H.H. cannot actually be present at the performance."

In July of this year, (1799) Sheridan renewed his attack on Elliston in his Bath fastnesses, bringing so powerful a force into the field, as to calculate on the fullest success. On the 6th, the following despatch reached the besieged party :—

"Mr. Sheridan presents compliments to Mr. Elliston, and, at the desire of the Duchess of Devonshire, has transmitted the enclosed. Mr. Sheridan will do himself the pleasure of writing to Mr. Elliston on the subject, in a day or two."

The enclosure was addressed to Mrs. Elliston by the Duchess.

"The Duchess of Devonshire has heard so much of Mr. Elliston's success in London, that if he wishes to be engaged at Drury Lane Theatre, she thinks there can be no doubt of his succeeding; and Mr. Sheridan would offer him terms he would approve. The Duchess will, in case this should take place, endeavour to obtain for Mrs. Elliston a great number of scholars."

There can be no doubt that the "desire of the

Duchess" was, in point of fact, the suggestion of Sheridan himself; who not unnaturally concluded that an application so flattering as that of her Grace of Devonshire—of her

> "Who, had she lived before the Siege of Troy,
> Helen, whose beauty summon'd Greece to arms,
> And drew a thousand ships to Tenedos,
> Had not been named in Homer's Iliad,"

would have been too dazzling for the weak eyesight of the noviciate actor, and that he would have been led blind to the asylum of Drury. But such was not the result—his duty and inclinations had both been pledged to his Bath friends beyond this offer of redemption, and for the present, at least, he refused acceding to any permanent engagement in London.

Thornton, the Windsor manager, having offered proposals to Elliston for his services for a certain number of nights, Robert William solicits the advice of his friend Lord Harcourt on the occasion, and receives, in consequence, the following answer:—

"Oxford, July 11, 1799.

"SIR,—As I understand their Majesties will not leave Windsor before the beginning of next month, I am glad to hear that you are in treaty with Mr. Thornton, as it will be the means of making your talents known to the king and queen, who, I doubt not, will honour you with their commands. I have

apprised them of the probability of your engagement at Windsor, and allow me to say, their Majesties are no strangers to the opinion I entertain of your abilities in the art you profess, or of the esteem I feel for you in your private character.

"I fear you will experience some difficulty in your choice of character for an appearance before their Majesties; for I must observe, that if Mr. Thornton's company be not improved since I last saw it, then is it only fit to exhibit in a village barn. This opinion, however, I have kept to myself, lest by its expression I might injure this most wretched band of performers: though I could not but regret so many able haymakers, sturdy blacksmiths, and active ostlers, should thus have miscalculated their usefulness, and despised the station which Providence had evidently allotted them.

"With this company, I cannot imagine how such plays could be produced which might shew you to advantage; and I should be concerned to find you were reduced to appear only in such characters, which, having no archetype in nature, render the actor but a mere buffoon, wherein he who stoops lowest is most successful. I wish you had seen Mr. Fawcett and Munden in the "Birthday:" their performance was exquisite; worthy, not only the Garrick school, but even Garrick himself. Munden is an actor of true genius; but I trust he will, for the future, *honour* Nature, and

not hold her up to scorn; that he will see by the *fairly* earned applause he obtained in the above drama, that it is not necessary to become a merry-andrew in order to please. The loudest laugh is not always the liveliest sensation of delight—it is a kind of borachio, which leaves no satisfaction better than a head-ache.

"*Don Felix*, *Charles Surface*, *Young Wilding*, the *Jew*, (in the "Jew and Doctor") and *Vapour*, are characters which would please their Majesties, and represent you to advantage. *Walter*, one of your best performances, I do not mention, because *I am sure the king will never again see the 'Children in the Wood.'* Pray give my compliments to Mrs. Elliston, and believe me to be, your humble servant, "HARCOURT."

Again, the Earl writes:—

"Nuneham, Saturday.

"SIR,—The patronage afforded to the theatre at Windsor by their Majesties, gives to it a distinction that obviates any objection which a performer of eminence might naturally have in appearing amongst actors so greatly inferior; and several of the first have, consequently, shewn themselves on that stage. It would be to your advantage, therefore, to accept the offer of the manager; otherwise, as I have been informed, the passion for cards so engrosses the minds of the Windsor inhabitants,

that they have but little inclination to go to plays.

"There is every reason to believe that the king and queen have no intention of quitting the castle this summer, and as I have before told you, their Majesties knowing my opinion of you, I think there is but little doubt of their commanding a play in which you would have the leading part. If I should have the honour of being summoned by their Majesties before September, I will contrive to pave the way for your appearance; but the choice of character is an affair of no small concern, as the king does not like any comedies of a serious cast, and I should be sorry, on the other hand, that you only shewed yourself in the walk of mere farce.

"I am particularly anxious you should play *The Liar*, because the grace of your deportment, your vivacity, and youthfulness of figure, unite to render your representation of that character a first-rate performance. You, Sir, and you almost alone, are the theatrical gentleman. Pray give my compliments to Mrs. Elliston, and believe me, your humble servant, "HARCOURT.

"My compliments also to Mr. Dimond."

In consequence of this flattering correspondence with his noble patron, Elliston arrived at Windsor on the 24th of July, and by command of his Majesty

acted on the following night, *Don Felix*, before the royal party. On the 26th, the next night, he was playing at Bristol, and again on the 27th at Windsor. Thus, to and fro, between Bristol and Windsor, he vibrated in the space of each civil day; constant as the sun, for one whole fortnight, he performed his course, and like him imparting light and life to the opaque bodies of his clustering fraternity.

It may be well believed, Elliston felt no little satisfaction in perceiving he had pleased the king. His Majesty expressed himself in terms highly flattering to this new object of his notice, and the delight he evidently felt at the several performances became a subject of public comment.

It was interesting as singular to behold, at this time, a sovereign—the King of England, at the head of his family, in simple citizenship, indulging sympathies with his people in their national pastimes; confessing his sense of enjoyment from the same source to which they, one and all, were accustomed to apply; brought with them by one common, humble invitation, to social pleasures; quite in fellowship, almost in contact with him who looked alone to health and strength, for the supply of his daily wants; on a spot which even the humblest burgess would have accounted mean; asking no adulation but the respect of well disciplined minds to age and honour; placing no restraint on the impulsive expression of joy or

wonderment, but leading the way in each indication of delight; echoing the youthful glee which the boy's "first play" excited, and almost pressing the same plank which danced with the compact array of animated gazers!

A fête on the 7th of August, in honour of the birth of the Princess Amelia, was given by her Majesty at Frogmore, and more especially in consequence of the princess's recovery from recent illness. Elliston was invited to speak some occasional lines, in the character of *Merlin*, before the royal party, for which the august convalescent presented him with ten guineas; Dr. Aylward, the king's organist, having given him apartments in the castle, during his stay.

Elliston acted six times in the fortnight's engagement at Windsor, the king having commanded five; by whose order, also, twenty-five guineas were transmitted to him on his benefit. He cleared by this trip above one hundred guineas.

These daily transits between Bristol and Windsor, being undertaken after each performance, by night, (for he slept like a top within a coach, as sound and as vertical,) were styled by his comrades *Night Errantry;* and verily our "Troubadour" could have been no other than "William de la *Tour*" himself, achieving also some certain exploits on these missions, if report be true, not altogether unworthy the famed "Provençal" band.

Elliston, who was one of those who consider no behaviour towards the other sex worthy the term civility which falls short of a positive declaration of love—like our forefathers, who fancied their hospitality poor, unless they made their guests dead drunk—used to relate a smart rebuke he once received in one of these moments of stage-coach *innamoramenti*. Addressing himself to a fair fellow-passenger in language somewhat savouring of *Young Wilding*, and perceiving the lady less favourable to his suit than he had expected, concluded by hoping he had not exceeded the bounds of decorum. "Perhaps not, sir," replied she; "but your limits of decorum are so extremely liberal that you may possibly lose your way in the excursion."

On another occasion, having acted the night at Windsor, and finding himself too late for the mail on reaching Slough, he was compelled at once to order a post-chaise, as it was necessary he should arrive at Bath by a certain hour the next day. With but a faint hope of finding any companion at that time of night, who might be about to take the same direction, he still made application within the entry of the "White Hart," when a stranger of no ordinary size, and enveloped in a large shaggy coat, sprang eagerly forward, declaring at once that he "was his man!"

His new-found friend being evidently a little *sprung*, Elliston began to repent his invitation; but

before he could raise any plausible objection, his agile companion had taken his seat within the vehicle, and already deposited what little baggage he appeared to be travelling with. Elliston, not displeased with the stranger's humour, but having little hope of reducing him to his own state of sobriety, fancied he could do no less than elevate himself to the same level. Ordering, therefore, a double-strong glass of brandy-and-water, much to the applause of his companion in the large coat, they started together.

Naturally enough, Elliston began his surmises who and what his companion could be. He was rough, but not vulgar; rude in speech, yet on the best terms with the very pride of nobility; and the tumblers he had emptied, (which too frequently, in humble life, like cupping-glasses, only draw out the ill-humours of the animal,) proved him clearly enough as good-tempered a fellow-voyager as many of his betters. What could he be? A question which his increasing volubility only rendered still more obscure; for, like an unskilled finger travelling the keys of a harpsichord, he touched on a vast variety of subjects, producing anything but intelligent sounds.

In summing up the case, Elliston concluded him to be the first-born of some good easy yeoman, who, on his first visit to London, had paid dearly for the "Stranger's Guide," and was now returning with

mock satisfaction and empty pockets to astonish the " auld wife at home." Suddenly, the stranger struck up the ballad of " Black-eyed Susan," which he sang not without some slight pretensions to taste; and on Elliston expressing his satisfaction at the change of entertainment, he pulled from under his coat a copy of the " Convivial Warbler," which, for all he could have deciphered at that time of night, might have been the " Æschylus" of Parson Adams, and immediately commenced, " My Friend and Pitcher."

How long he would have pursued this vein of melody is uncertain; but on the chaise stopping for change of horses, (as to the term " fresh," it was far more applicable to the travellers than the poor cattle,) he abruptly broke off, and ordering one other tumbler " of the same," cried, " So much for good luck at Moulsey, and now all's over!" This expression Elliston as little understood as the rest his companion had vouchsafed in the form of prose, when suddenly the stranger raising the ostler's lantern directly on the comedian's counte. nance, and planting his hand impressively on his shoulder exclaimed—

" I know you, sir; you are the Prince of Wales. I'll not sell you—you know, sir, I'll not sell you," shaking Elliston cordially. " Here!" continued he, pointing to his empty glass; " I would say it before your honoured father himself, God bless him!—

never a drop more from this day midnight—six weeks and hard allowance; you look to me—I know you look to me, and I'll stand your friend."

Like an Egyptian hieroglyphic, full of interest, yet perfectly unintelligible, he continued his fragmental address for some miles further, when again murmuring, "You're the 'Prince of Wales,'" he fell into a most audible sleep.

In due time, the travellers reached Woolhampton, the place, as Elliston had understood, his friend intended parting; he hereupon returned the humeral salutation, with a full per centage of violence, at the same time roaring in his ear, "Woolhampton!" This altisonant announcement had the desired effect. Up sprang the tenant of the rough habiliment, and rubbing his eyes violently for a few moments, "Woolhampton?" repeated he. "Yes," continued Elliston, "and here, I'm afraid we part."

"Sir," replied the other, taking the actor's hand, "we've been fellow-travellers so far; and now, with best service to ye for the number o' merry tales you've told us, what's the total of my whack?" and out he drew a canvass bag, containing no despicable sum.

"Why, verily, my good fellow——" began Elliston; but the other at once apprehending his meaning, jerked him smartly by the collar, exclaiming, "Gingerly—gingerly! You don't stir to-night unless I pay my whack. Come! how much—a brace o' smelts?"

"A brace of smelts!" repeated Elliston.

"Two half-guineas," continued the other; "remember, I've six hard weeks on't in yon village there."

"How?"

"Why, didn't I tell you all at the 'White Hart?"

"Not a word?"

"Whew!—that I should 'a been travelling with a gent thirty mile, and said not a word!" Elliston here merely interrupted him with a smile. "My name's Tom Owen," proceeded he, jocosely, but confidentially; "you've heard of the fight that's to come off, in September, at Moulsey, 'twixt me and Davis, as good a man as ever entered the ring; but 'tis plaguy hard, training—six weeks on't. Harkye, I know I'm the better man, for a' that; so make your bets." Which having said, and insisted on paying his share of the chaise expenses, he was departing, brisk and partly sober; his little portmanteau dangling from a sturdy ash, when Elliston called out,

"Well, beat your man, and good luck to you; but the girl!—the girl! Why give '*Susan*' *a black-eye?*"

Snapping his fingers with a laugh, the bruiser mounted the stile, and was presently out of sight.

From Windsor, Elliston proceeded to Plymouth, and acted for the first time the part of *Rolla*. His youth, his appearance, the romantic cast of the

drama, and the great popularity of both actor and play, at this precise time, rendered this one of the most successful sea-port speculations, that the manager of the West had made for several years. The Cornish and Devon families talked more, even at this moment, of "Pizarro," than Tippoo Sultan—of Elliston, than Sir David Baird; while Acre, Napoleon, and Sir Sidney, were lost in the Andes, *Almagro*, and *Rolla*. From Plymouth, Elliston went next to Birmingham, and having acted his number of nights, according to agreement, he proceeded to Weymouth, where he terminated his summer excursion, and again played before the royal family.

George the Third, as is well known, was extremely partial to Weymouth, and it was no unusual thing for him to take his stroll, quite unattended. On the morning of Elliston's benefit, (an occasion which the king had expressly honoured by a command,) he had been enjoying one of these afternoon wanderings, when rain coming on just as he was passing the theatre-door, in he went, and finding no one immediately at hand, proceeded at once to the royal box, and seated himself in his own chair.

The dim daylight of the theatre, and slight fatigue, which exercise had occasioned, induced an inclination of drowsiness. His Majesty, in fact, fell into a comfortable doze, which presently became a sound sleep. In the meantime, Lord Townshend,

who had encountered Elliston in the neighbourhood, inquired whether he had seen the king, as his Majesty had not been at the palace since his three o'clock dinner; and it being then nearly five, the queen and princesses were in some little anxiety about him. But his lordship gaining no direction from the dramatic star, pursued his object in another course.

Elliston, now making his way to the theatre for the purpose of superintending all things necessary for the reception of his august patrons, went straight into the king's box; and on perceiving a man fast asleep in his Majesty's chair, was about recalling him to his senses, in as ungentle a manner as he roused the recollection of Tom Owen in the post-chaise, when, very fortunately, he discovered who his friend really was, who had so unexpectedly dropped in.

What was to be done? Elliston could not presume to wake his Majesty—to approach him—speak to him—touch him, impossible!—and yet something was necessary to be attempted, as it was now time the theatre should be lit, and what was of still greater importance, the anxiety of the queen and family assuaged.

Elliston hit on the following expedient: taking up a violin, from the orchestra, he stepped into the pit, and placing himself just beneath his truly-exalted guest, struck up, *dolcemente*, "God Save

the King!" The expedient had the desired effect: the royal sleeper was gently loosened from the spell which had bound him; and awaking, up he sprang, and, staring the genuflecting comedian full in the face, exclaimed, "Hey! hey! hey! what, what! Oh, yes! I see, Elliston—ha! ha! rain came on—took a seat—took a nap. What's o'clock?"

"Approaching six, your Majesty."

"Six!—six o'clock!" interrupted the king. "Send to her Majesty—say I'm here. Stay—stay—this wig won't do,—eh, eh? Don't keep the people waiting—light up—light up—let 'em in—let 'em in—ha! ha! fast asleep.—Play well to-night, Elliston! Great favourite with the Queen. Let 'em in—let 'em in."

The house was presently illuminated—messengers were sent off to the royal party, which, in a short lapse of time, reached the theatre. Elliston then quitted the side of his most affable monarch; and dressing himself in five minutes for his part in the drama, went through his business with bounding spirit; nor was his glee at all diminished, when, on attending the royal visitors to their carriage, the king once more nodded his head, saying, "Fast asleep, eh, Elliston!—fast asleep!"

CHAPTER VI.

Covent Garden Theatre—"The Glorious Eight"—Subscription Room at Windsor—A fracas—Damages—A conjurer—Elliston eased of his money—A cock without a head—Elliston grows ambitious—Lord Harcourt's reproof—A royal fête—Elliston in many parts—*Bon mot* of the King—Mr. Elliston writes to the Master of Sidney—Elliston a gamester—Mr. Rundall's advice—A comic adventure with an old bachelor of Bath—A dinner—Extraordinary hoax.

It will be recollected by those who may have felt an interest in theatrical history, that, at the commencement of the year 1800, Eight of the actors then on the establishment of Covent Garden Theatre assailed Mr. Henry Harris, the proprietor, in a pamphlet,* on asserted grievances; which dispute being referred to the Lord Chamberlain,† was by him decided against the complainants.

* The pamphlet was supposed to have been written by Holman. The other seven appellants were, J. Johnstone, A Pope, J. Munden, C. Incledon, J. Fawcett, T. Knight, H. Johnston. With the exception of Holman, all these actors continued at Covent Garden, after the award given against them.

† The Marquis of Salisbury.

The "Glorious Eight," as this band of insurrectionists was designated by superannuated Moody, (memorable as the apprentices in arms against a former *Harry* of England,) having sustained a signal defeat, the monarch of Covent Garden sought now the strength of some foreign alliance, and made overtures accordingly to Robert William, Lord of the principality of Bath! Long was the negotiation pending, and for a considerable time Elliston was undecisive whether to accept the flattering offers made to him from Mr. Harris, or to enter on the management at Bath, as Dimond was now on the eve of retiring from the stage.

Once more did Elliston make an effort for a share in that theatre, which had been the cradle of his fame; but his very popularity was in this instance prejudicial to his purpose—the proprietors fearing, had they acceded to his request, he would soon acquire an absolute control. His engagement, however, was renewed, under terms highly advantageous.

Elliston was fond of billiards, and played a good game—for a gentleman—but had as little chance with its professors, as any idler who suddenly takes a fancy for a country life, and turns agriculturist in opposition to the whole farming practice of the county, on some infallible principle of his own—within two years he is gazetted!

On one of his repeated excursions to Windsor, he visited the "Subscription Room" of that cele-

brated town; and amongst other persons, met there a Mr. R., a gentleman who followed, with equal diligence, two professions—billiards and painting. In respect of the former, he had also a twofold faculty of performance, namely, ill or well, just as he pleased; in respect of the latter, his quality fell perhaps only under one denomination. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that either from modesty or a hatred of display, or some such benign sentiment, he did not always shew himself to the best advantage at the game of billiards; as men of good taste deem it a piece of coxcombry to be ever walking the streets in a birth-day suit.

Such had been the delicacy of Mr. R. whenever he had knocked about the balls in Elliston's company; so that the artist's "second best suit" of play, appearing upon a par with the actor's only one, a match was proposed between them, and to it they went with mutual gusto.

For some time they played about even; but the stakes being now raised to a considerable amount, with additional interest the combatants began anew. The actor required no prompter to give him his cue, nor the artist to be reminded of the bold strokes of the great masters. To it they went —when suddenly, by some sudden inspiration, Apelles was invested, like a harlequin, with his birth-day suit of colours, beating his adversary completely off the field; so that, in the same propor-

tion that he filled the pockets of the table, he emptied those of the tragedian.

Surmises followed closely on the heels of astonishment; and Elliston began strongly to suspect he had fallen amongst thieves—a point on which he was not long in making himself understood, by at once pronouncing Mr. R. a swindler.

The limner, ill enduring "the immediate jewel of his soul" to be thus rifled, threw down his cue, and advancing to Elliston, threatened to kick him down stairs, at the same time, wheeling him round as if to put his menace into execution. But though the assault was the painter's, the battery was the player's; for Elliston, directing a well-aimed blow on the sconce of his assailant, sent him reeling over a tall coal-scuttle, scattering, at the same time, the bituminous contents over the "Subscribers'" apartment. The painter soon recovered his legs, but was in a woful plight; in the language of art, his eye actually stood out from the canvass, and he displayed a bold outline of feature, of which Fuseli himself might have been enamoured.

To render the matter still more unfortunate, the artist was, at this juncture, laying soft siege to the affections of a certain merry wife of Windsor, who was in fact quite to his taste,—being a delicate piece of art, and unquestionably in good keeping; and although scars, like grey hairs, are ever deemed honourable and mightily extolled by the fair, yet a

thorough thrashing, in a public billiard room, could scarcely be deemed a feather in a man's cap, unless, indeed, a white one. The consequence was, the academician was spoiled of his intrigue; and deeming it prudent to raise the siege in respect of his mistress, he turned all his energies to an action of another description—withdrawing from the Court of Cupid to prosecute more advantageous triumphs in the Court of King's Bench.

The result was, a trial, which took place in February, 1801. Mr. Rundall, of the India House, (Elliston's brother-in-law,) having attended the cause, transmits to our hero the following account:—

"You may be surprised—I am sure you will be annoyed—at the event of your trial: a verdict for the plaintiff, and damages fifty pounds; which, with costs, I fancy can be no less than one hundred. Brown's evidence differed wonderfully from the history he gave to me; he stated, that without any provocation, beyond mortification at your own bad play, you gratified your humour by knocking down your opponent, declaring, that if you couldn't beat him one way, you would another. Your counsel, Erskine, dwelt long on the improbability of this statement; and in a humorous speech, alluding to the skuttle, told the jury that this witness being "hauled over the coals" in cross-examination, cut but a dirty figure. This was well enough; but he

called not a single witness himself; relying for success, as he is too apt to do, on the merits of his speech. I am quite persuaded, that if perjury did not absolutely get a verdict on the one hand, carelessness lost one on the other. The uncertainty of the law is too great a grievance at the best—it need not be aggravated by the slovenliness of counsel."

Elliston was attached to his profession by lovelier ties than those of mere worldly acquisitions—he delighted in its mystery—was fond of acting; and on the non-play nights, at Bath or Bristol, he generally gave some provincial theatre a taste of his quality.

On one occasion, being at an inn with manager Shatford, after a night's performance at Salisbury, from which place the only public conveyance to Bath was a coach, which passed through Sarum between two and three o'clock in the morning, Shatford suggested, for pastime, a game at loo; a dish of which (like Henry I. and his lampreys) he was particularly fond.

"But where can we procure a third?" said he—"the landlord? let's call him up!"

"By all means," responded Elliston. "And I'll run and hold the maids from stepping into bed;"—which part of the proposition he was in the immediate act of prosecuting, when the ears of both were assailed by a voice on the stairs, chanting, "The early Horn salutes the Morn;" and on the

two companions opening the door, they descried a tall, gaunt stranger on the landing, in a scarlet coat, brown hat turned up with green, and leathern small clothes, exhibiting fresh indications of the lutulent condition of the highways.

Elliston, rushing forward, and catching him by his bespattered tail, exclaimed,

"You'll make one, sir!—come, let's begin! With 'Tantivy,' Shatford, we're three already."

The stranger, not a little astonished, gazed for a moment without reply, and then began, deliberately, to resume his stave.

"Hoh! ha! Early Horn!" "What, again?" interrupted Elliston; but hark ye, one game—one round at loo, before you go—'tis a noble, a charming game. Socrates learnt to dance, and Isocrates played at loo.—Come, come, a chair for 'Actæon'!"

"With all my heart, gentlemen," replied the stranger, raising his hat with profound politeness—"but the poor state of my purse——"

"Nay, nay, we'll lend you five guineas," interposed Shatford.

"Ten!" rejoined Elliston; on which, the guest in scarlet again manifesting the deepest sense of obligation, they all sat down together. Shatford produced his cards, which, like a charm against witchcraft, he ever carried about him, and in a very short time, our friend, the "Early Horn," made considerable progress. He presently won the five

guineas already lent to him; and in the course of one half-hour, cleared the purses of Elliston and his companion; winning, in fine, a silver pencil-case, the last tenant of Robert William's side-pocket.

Deliberately drawing forth his watch, and marking the time, the gentleman in red, with his wonted politeness, rose to take his leave.

"You'll give us our revenge, sir?" shrieked *Octavian.*

"Undoubtedly, sir," responded the owner of the brown hat.

"But when?—where? I shall be at Salisbury this day week—Thursday—Early Horn!"

"Why really, sir, I would indulge you," continued the tall traveller, "but on that night I am engaged at Devizes, to cut a cock's head off!"

"*To cut a cock's head off!*" repeated Elliston, with the most petrifying solemnity—"to cut a cock's head off!—and have we been playing with a decapitator of the sultan of dunghills? Who are you, sir?"

"Much at your service," answered the politest horseman in England, presenting, at the same time, a card, not remarkable for cleanliness; on which Elliston, in his beloved intonation of voice, read "*Mr. Moon, the celebrated conjurer, whose dexterity in command of the cards is universally acknowledged, will undertake to convey the contents of any gentleman's purse into his, Mr. Moon's pocket, with sur-*

prising facility. He will, moreover, cut a cock's head off without injuring that noble bird!"

It may be well conceived, the group at this moment formed rather a striking picture. The scarlet Caterfelto was the first to dissolve the tableau; when, again bending his body, he quitted the apartment, just as the coach drove up, which was to convey the hero of these Memoirs from his profitable engagement at Salisbury.

The interest Lord Harcourt had taken in Elliston's professional honour and advancement, flattering as it was to the husband, was yet more deeply felt in the grateful reflections of the wife. To Mrs. Elliston the happiness was twofold; for while the favour of the Earl had clearly backed the actor's merits, when they had been brought under the notice of the sovereign, still

> "The heart of woman feels no greater joy
> Than when ———
> She hears the praises of the one she loves."

This favour had also operated usefully to Mrs. Elliston's progress in the good graces of the great. "*Mrs. Elliston*" was the fashion—the rage! The young debutantes in elegant life were proud of the instruction received under her direction; and, like Buonarroti's scholars, the character of the pupil was sunned by the fame of the instructor.

Mrs. Elliston was eminently endowed with those

qualities which tend to the solid endurance of domestic peace—cheerful, but circumspect—gentle, yet energetic; while liberality with prudence mingled in every sentiment of her mind, and were the counsel of all her actions.

Elliston, at this period (the commencement of 1801), was suddenly possessed by an *esprit de vertige* —a fancy for obtaining a royal licence for opening a third theatre in London: and such was the sanguine, or rather precipitate quality of his mind, that in his own imagination, he beheld the new edifice already built—himself absolute dictator; issuing his *Berlin* and *Milan* decrees against the labouring dynasties of Drury Lane and Covent Garden—declaring their stage-doors in a state of blockade, and holding in his palm the destinies of the allegiant Muse.

Recalled at intervals, by his faithful monitress, to more sober deliberations, under her advice he solicits the opinion of his friend Lord Harcourt, and wisely consents to abide his direction. The Earl admonishes him in the following terms:—

"Harcourt House, April 25, 1801.

"Sir,—You have imposed on me the ungracious task of discouraging the pleasing prospects of youthful, but by no means, a blamable ambition; yet it is the duty of an honest man, when applied to, to give his opinion with plain sincerity; and

therefore, in one word, I tell you, I am perfectly convinced of the impracticability of your plan, and my reasons are,

" In the first place, my firm belief that the King would not be inclined to grant another patent; and that, were his Majesty so disposed, the powerful opposition of the existing patentees would induce his Majesty to yield to the prayer of their petition, against the establishment of a third winter theatre.

"In the next place, the magistrates would probably remonstrate against the introduction of a new place of public amusement, as unfortunately theatres are becoming more and more the refuge of idlers rather than the resort of men of taste.

" Recollect, too, the existing theatres have been enlarged, to meet the extended population of the town; and if you were permitted to examine their accounts at the termination of each season, you would perhaps find that the number of persons who frequent plays, scarcely remunerate the exertions of the two houses. Some fortunate seasons certainly transpire; but to what costly and precarious expedients are the managers compelled! The pure drama has but little attraction for the unhappy fancy of the day. How is success at present calculated on?—a five-act farce composed of such characters as never did yet exist, intermixed, occasionally, with some forced, or sickly sentiment, supported by grimace or buffoonery, with the motley

train of processions, battles, spectres, pantomimes, and Scaramouch ballets. I should regret that you, sir, should administer to this perversion of a noble study; but this you must do, should your object be pecuniary success in any new theatrical speculation.

"Having now honestly placed before you my impressions on your proposed scheme, I have only to assure you of my good wishes and ready advice on all occasions. Pray give my compliments to Mrs. Elliston. HARCOURT."

The foregoing letter, reader, was written in the year 1801. Shade of the Earl! what would have been his language in 1841?

On the first of August, a *fête dramatique* took place at Radipole, under the immediate direction of the Princess Elizabeth—a kind of *masque champêtre*, projected, and given by her royal highness to the King and Queen, accompanied by other branches of the family, and many of the nobility.

A superb tent was erected for the reception of their Majesties, before whom, as they approached, young damsels, in the character of Dryads, tripped, and carolled, scattering flowerets and devices. Then commenced the entertainment by an agrestic masquerade: a party of comedians, attired as gipsies, being grouped under a hedge in the distance, which formed the boundary of the pansied stage. Here was a king mightier than George of England,

and a Queen o'er spells more potent than the flag of Britain; for here, enthroned, were *Oberon* and *Titania*—here, *Puck* and *Pease-blossom*, and here—

> "Over hill—over dale,
> Thorough bush, thorough brier,
> Over park—over pale,
> Thorough flood, thorough fire,"

a handful of fairies, outstripping far the Alpine progress of the hero of Marengo. Music, too, breaking in dulcet sounds the willing air, joined the conspiracy to charm and captivate. All was as yet illusion, till *Oberon* and his filmy train, condensed once more to a state of man by the mortal visitation of thirst and hunger, gave ample proof that not all the acorns Nature had ever yet showered on the ground, would have supplied one tolerable cup; and as to "a little mushroom table spread," we fear such fungus bit of furniture, with pedicle to boot, would scarcely have yielded a mouthful for the condition of the flesh.

It was at this period of the entertainment, when Elliston (who had been again engaged by the Weymouth manager at the express desire of his Majesty) appeared before the delighted party in the more mundane quality of "Herald of the British arms!" The Danish fleet had been just destroyed by Lord Nelson; and in the same year the French had been defeated by Abercrombie at Alexandria. Elliston, laying the captured ensigns of victory at the feet of

the king, repeated a poetic address, written expressly by the Princess Amelia; the subjoined is an extract:—

"Welcome, my liege, my ever honour'd lord!
Oh, were it mine, in action or in word,
My zeal, my loyalty, my duteous love
To thee, the father of our land, to prove!

"See, the flush'd cheek, so lately pale with fear,
Receives the grateful, the ecstatic tear—
The quivering lip, now trembling with delight,
Fain would articulate, confess aright,
How deep affection's root still deeper grows,
Which to thy worth, progressive firmness owes.

"As o'er the hidden riches of the main,
Thy conquering navy rides with pride,—disdain,
In search of knowledge which it values more;
So o'er Time's offerings doth thy spirit soar.
Call on the hov'ring shades of Minden's plain,
On Nelson's heroes, victors on the main,
That they may aid this ill-sufficient lay,
To bless thee, Brunswick, and preserve thy day!"

The applause which followed this recital had scarcely ceased, when Elliston, a new impersonation —"forsooth, took on him as a conjuror"—and in the garb of "*Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus de Hohenheim,*" or more familiarly, as the renowned Paracelsus, presented himself again on the parterre.

"—— ille suæ non immemor artis,
Omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum."

In this he was very happy: sustaining the part of the magician, with timely allusions to the martial glories of England—that the genius of Britain was in fact the long-dreamt-of philosopher's stone, and the valour of her sons, that moral elixir, diffusing unanimity and peace throughout the nations of the world.

This tissue of clap-trap being dexterously spun and admirably measured out, was received of course with no less applause than everything else which had preceded. The king was mightily pleased, and the whole court therefore obediently gratified; while the royal hostess, the princess, expressed herself in terms highly complimentary to the exertions of the favourite comedian.

There was but one slight failure in the whole entertainment. A young vocalist, of some promise, belonging to the Weymouth company, having been appointed to sing one of Dibdin's ballads, in the costume of a sailor, was seized by sudden panic on being brought into the presence of real Majesty, and most piteously broke down at the first stanza. His cheek fairly struck its colours; his whistle failed him, and in point of fact, the British *tar* "stuck in his throat." The king good-humouredly observed, it was the first time he had ever seen an English sailor frightened.

Other *jeux scéniques* followed, and the day passed off with well-merited éclat. The king and part of his family visited the theatre that very night.

Elliston, having transmitted all these fine accounts to his wife, at Bath, she writes the following to his uncle, the Doctor, who was at that time residing at Westminster :—

"Bath, August 20, 1801.

"My dear Sir,—As I know the pleasure you always feel in hearing good news of ourselves, I am induced to send you a short statement of Mr. Elliston's progress at Weymouth. He tells me that the royal family witnessed all his performances, and said so many handsome things of him, that had he not been writing to *me*, his sense of modesty would have withheld him from repeating them. At an entertainment given by the Princess Elizabeth, at Radipole, he was entrusted with the whole management. The king presented him with twenty-five guineas, the queen, with ten, the Princess Elizabeth, twelve, and he received ten in addition from the rest of the royal family.

"Mr. Elliston has been, during the last fortnight, at Plymouth, where he found a depressed state of theatricals; but the princess interested herself in his favour,—writing to the Countess of Ely, who with others of the nobility, residing around, patronized him. Believe me, my dear sir, I mostly value all this because, I am sure his diligence will recommend him to your regard, and confirm the generous friendship felt for him by Lord Harcourt. Of my husband's talents, I think highly, (if I might venture such judgment as my own,) but I am sure the in-

creasing favour of personages so exalted as those I have named, is greatly owing to the esteem they have for him as a gentleman: this point I trust he will long bear in mind.

"I bless God that our prospects are so good; and I pray blessings on those who have been the instruments, in His hands, of conferring on us so much comfort. Your god-daughter, Eliza, has had the hooping-cough, but is now fast recovering—the other two continue well.

"I have ventured to send you half-a-dozen of our Bath cheeses, as you may have some friends near you, whom you might wish to oblige with a sample, as well as for your own use. And believe me, my dear sir, with all respect and gratitude,

"Your dutiful niece,

To this the Doctor made a most affectionate reply, congratulating his nephew on the brilliancy of his prospects, and recommending him to look on these late favours rather as encouragement to exertion than as any temptation to frivolity or repose.

"And begging pardon," continues he, "for quoting Greek to that sex whose occupations should always be strictly feminine, I would remind him of the wise exhortation—αιεν αριστευειν, and to think nothing achieved whilst anything remains unaccomplished."

As we have professed in the outset, so will we endeavour to preserve to the end, the character of fidelity in these pages, nor, in tenderness to the memory of our subject, cast a veil over facts which might operate as a lesson to later generations, or become useful to others in a similar career to his own.

The truly parental letter which we have just noticed, while it filled our adventurer with exultation, might have taught him also the value of a good name. Within two months of its receipt, the following was addressed to Elliston, written by his sincere friend Mr. Rundall, brother to his wife:—

"My dear Robert,—I have heard a piece of intelligence which has afflicted me more severely than anything which has occurred to me for many years. This, to speak out, is your love of gaming! Dalmeida has given me this most unwelcome information. He was lately in company with some friends —theatrical and otherwise; and on mentioning you with commendation and regard, a gentleman present—a counsellor, very high in his profession—acceded willingly to your public talents, but pronounced you a *determined—an habitual gamester*,—that Knight was the man who had been the principal instrument of your disgrace, which, owing to your easy temper, he found no difficult task.

"Your exploits are the theme of gossip amongst the very waiters at the White Hart, the frequenters

of that house talking openly and before them, of what you had either won or lost at billiards or with the dice. You will gain the character of a blackleg long before you will acquire wit enough to live by his profession; you will be ruined in fame and fortune, without the advantage of that cunning which occasionally prospers. Knight is a very bad character; I have seen, 'tis true, but little of him, yet quite enough to know he is not your friend.

"I will not, my dear Robert, disguise my sentiments from you, however harsh they may be, or however deeply they may wound you for the moment; for, by the blessing of God, you may have hereafter cause to thank me. I am cut to the soul when I contemplate these facts, and look on you at the same time, as a husband and a father. Think of your shame, too, should the knowledge, the hint only of these reports, reach your uncle—one who has indeed been a parent to you, having cherished you in your days of guiltlessness, and forgiven your transgressions. For the sake of others, let me implore you to reflect! I have not told you all I have heard, nor many malicious anecdotes, which I am still willing to account untrue.

"With fervent prayers for your happiness, and for the peace of a wife you *cannot* too highly value and cherish,

"I am most affectionately yours,

"T. W. RUNDALL.

"East India House, Dec. 18, 1801."

Having fulfilled our duty by inserting the above, in which we assure our readers we will not follow them with any action for slander, whatever terms of reproach they may heap upon our graceless hero, we turn cheerfully to an incident which, if not so full of solid instruction as Mr. Rundall's letter, will shew that our subject could sometimes be merry without sacrifice of character:—

In the vicinity of the Abbey Church, Bath, resided a Mr. Sims, an opulent woollen-draper—a man of strict probity in all transactions of life—whose active benevolence and unassailable good-humour, had acquired to him the esteem of a wide circle of acquaintances.

This personage was a bachelor, and at this time about sixty-five years of age. His figure was tall, his step airy, his deportment the flower of politeness, and in disputes he was the very Atticus of parties. His dress was usually a suit of grey; and his hair, of which there was a profusion, being perfectly white, whereunto a queue appended, gave him somewhat of a *Sir Joshua* contour; though perhaps he bore a nearer resemblance to the more modern portrait of that precise merchant, as personated by the late Mr. Terry, in Poole's admirable little comedy of "Simpson and Co."

While he paid a marked deference to all men's opinions, he had a mistrust of his own, which was singularly curious. On a sudden torrent, for in-

stance, which some people would denominate " cats and dogs," he would merely *apprehend that it rained;* and if the house were as suddenly enveloped in flame, he would *suggest the expediency of quitting the tenement.* His respect for the other sex was so profound, as to keep in awful subjection every gentler impulse of the bosom—for he was far from a woman-hater; on the contrary, he could not honour them too highly; but it was all honour.

His " menage" consisted of a duplicate female attendant, that is, two separate beings, but with brains under the same meridian, whose autumnal time of life and counterpart in attire, rendered them perfectly homogeneous.

The great characteristic of Mr. Sims was a painful precision in all things. His hat always occupied the left peg in respect of his coat. His parlour furniture was cased in cotton covers, which covers were again involuted by divers sheets of brown paper, resembling the pendant patterns in a tailor's shop. Everything, according to him, was " to wear even;" if he pulled *this* bell rope on the first occasion, he would bear in mind to handle *that* on the second; every chair, tea-cup, and silver spoon, had its day of labour and relaxation; and had he discovered that, by misadventure, he had worn a pair of shoes or grey stockings out of turn, he would positively have lost his stomach.

In his dressing-room, he was constantly attended

by his two waiting-women; not that he actually required the services of both, but by such means the reputation of each was kept in a state of preservation; and, to conclude, whenever he retired to bed, he invariably crept up the foot of it, that his linen might be without a wrinkle.

It may not at once appear, how any sympathies could have existed between a *Milesian* like Elliston and such a character as this; but Mr. Sims was by no means an ascetic: he was never as wise as Ximenes, and not always as moderate as Fleury; and in respect of his little indulgences, like the country wench, he looked very much as though he had rather sin again than repent. And why not? an extra glass of punch, or a visit prolonged to midnight, constituted his excess; though once, indeed, he had been known to have so far mystified himself, as to toast a certain female of no extraordinary virtue, in a tumbler of toddy. He, however, confessed he went for three days unshaved, from the above event, as he had not the assurance to look on himself in the glass, after so peccant an action.

Mr. Sims was fond of a play, and had some taste for the drama. He had seen the best actors of Garrick's day, and could talk critically on the genius of "rare Ben Jonson." Mr. Sims, therefore, became, with other Bath people, known to the Elliston family.

Mrs. Elliston being absent for a few days on a

visit to Mrs. Collins, Elliston was consequently left at Bath, *en garçon.* On one of his widowed afternoons, his knocker announced some visitor, and Mr. Sims himself deferentially entered.

"My dear Mr. Elliston," cried he, as he advanced, with a step lighter than a roebuck, "have I indeed caught you!—this is charming!—and how well you look! Listen: I promised your excellent wife to have an eye on you during her absence, and so I will, for you positively must—must I say, dine with me to-day."

"Dine with you, Mr. Sims?" exclaimed Elliston, in a tone which must have been truly comic. "My good Mr. Sims——"

"—— Nay, nay—I shall be downright riotous if I hear any excuses. I absolutely must—must have you. In fact," continued he, making a leg, as he advanced, and tapping the tip of his left fore-finger with the corresponding extremity of the right, "my dinner is already ordered—within one hour will be served—see, with what little ceremony I treat you."

There was something irresistibly grotesque even in the proposition; for though Mr. Sims was by no means a stranger in the house, yet the very suggestion of a *tête-à-tête* repast with the precise woollen-draper, appeared one of those things which, although clearly possible, had still never yet been known to have transpired. As for instance, A man shall not marry his grandmother

"To-day! said you, worthy neighbour?" demanded Elliston, as he passed his hand thoughtfully across his forehead—"to-day—that is—*this* day, is——"

"Thursday, I would suggest," interposed Sims, most apologetically.

"Just so; and here comes my friend Quick, who reminds me of his promised visit. Dinner on table punctually at five—" continued Elliston, addressing himself to Quick, just as he entered—"not a minute later;" which was of course the first notice the other had had at all of the matter, while Elliston himself was quite aware he had not a solitary cutlet in the house.

"But—but—" interrupted Sims, with his fingers as before—"my humble fare is preparing—is nearly ready——"

"—— And will be excellent when eaten cold to-morrow," rejoined Elliston; "but to-day—to-day, Sims, you are *my* guest!"

The draper having recovered from the shock which these words occasioned, was evidently as pleased as Punch at the proposition, though he looked on the affair as one of the maddest pranks ever yet attempted—quite a Camelford exploit of that day, or Waterford of the present; the challenge, however, he accepted, but to no one's surprise more than his own.

"I will at least apprise my domestics," said Sims, catching up his hat and cane, with the inten-

tion of tripping off to his own abode; but Elliston, grasping his arm with considerable melodramatic effect, said, "Not so, friend Sims; this is a point easier settled; and our time is short. Take your own card, neighbour, and just subscribe in pencil, '*remains to-day with Mr. Elliston,*' and I will despatch it instantly."

The expedient was no sooner suggested than adopted, and Elliston, taking Mr. Sims' card, vanished instantly from the room, for the purpose already named, but secretly interpolated certain other words to the protocol in question, so that it ran thus—"*Mr. Sims remains to-day with Mr. Elliston, and begs that the dinner he had ordered, may be carefully delivered, just as prepared, to the bearer.*"

This being achieved, Elliston returned to the apartment; and Quick being by this time, well assured some *belle plaisanterie* was in blossom, took part in the amicable contest of civil things, till dinner was announced; and thus, within a quarter of an hour of five, the happy trio sat down together.

But no sooner was the first cover removed, than Sims, with some little look of surprise, and great show of satisfaction, exclaimed—"A trout! Mr. Elliston. Well, and I protest a very fine one! but the fishmonger's a rogue, for he told me *mine* was the only one in the market!"

"Fishmongers do lie most infernally," observed Elliston; "why, he told me the very same thing.

Come, a glass of wine! Had you been a married man now, this little annoyance had never reached you. Ah! you bachelors! But peradventure you are one who, in searching for female perfection, can only find it in the wives of his friends."

Here Sims hid his face.

"And then as to a nursery," interposed Quick, "your bachelor, by adoption, may pick and choose his heir; but if he marries, he must put up with any booby that Providence assigns him."

"Excellent!" cried Elliston. "Come, a glass of wine!"

A second cover was now removed, and a shoulder of mutton, admirably dressed, was presented; at the sight of which Sims, clasping his hands in token of renewed astonishment, exclaimed,

"A shoulder of mutton!—why, it *is* a shoulder—the very dish I had ordered myself."

"Similar, similar," interposed Quick, laughingly; "a coincidence."

Sims acknowledged the correction by one of the blandest smiles in nature.

"Coincidences are indeed extraordinary," observed Elliston. "I remember in May, —99, the very day Seringapatam was taken, our sexton's wife was brought to bed of twins."

"With great humility, my dear Mr. Elliston," observed Sims, "that may be a coincidence; but is it, think you, so very—very remarkable?"

"Why, Hindostan does not yield us cities every spring," replied Elliston, "nor are sextons' wives brought to bed of twins, as a matter of course."

"And that, both of these events should have happened on the same day, is at least extraordinary," added Quick.

"Say no more—say no more; I am completely answered," rejoined Sims.

Here Elliston suggested another glass of wine all round.

By this time a third cover was removed, and a tart very temptingly served, succeeded, which Elliston having commenced dividing, Sims rose from his chair, and extending his hands over the dismantled *tourte de pommes*, screamed out,

"An apple-pie, as I live! Forgive me for swearing, but I gave special orders for an apple-pie myself. Apple—apple, said I to Mrs. Green and Mrs. Blowflower, and here it is!"

"Yes, I'll give up Seringapatam after this," said Elliston, mysteriously; "but when fruit is in season you know——why, I'll be bound they have an apple-tart next door."

"Apples are unusually plentiful this year," observed Quick.

"Come, another glass of wine! It shall at least be no apple of discord."

The repast was now drawing to a close, and Elliston, who had promised his guests a bottle of supe-

rior port wine, gave orders for its immediate introduction; but in the meantime, a half Stilton cheese, in prime condition, was placed on the table.

We are told that a certain maréchal of France was always taken in convulsions at the sight of a sucking pig, that Tycho Brahe swooned at the very glimpse of a hare, and that the philosophic Bayle was seized with sickness at the sound of water running from a cock; but the concentrated force of all these phenomena, could scarcely have produced a more electric shock, than the sudden appearance of the said Stilton cheese on the nerves of Mr. Sims. Springing from his seat, as though stung by an adder, he gazed upon the dish before him in breathless stupefaction, and was no sooner restored to strength of utterance, than he shrieked aloud,

"A cheese! a cheese!—and is it possible, a Stilton cheese, too?"

"My good Sims——" interrupted Elliston.

"——'Tis magic! magic! Excuse me for swearing; but I—I, myself, my dear Mr. Elliston, have a Stilton too!"

"And what more probable?"

"But the mould!—that fine blue mould!—and all this marble tracing—'tis most positively the same!"

"Similar, similar," interposed Quick, a second time.

"Tell me," said Elliston, with an ineffable look

of wisdom, " where did you purchase your half Stilton?"

" At Coxe's," was the reply.

" Then, upon my honour, the cheese before you was bought at the same place. Why, 'tis the other half! and your fine blue mould and marble veining must inevitably correspond to the minutest speck. the fact is, we have been lucky to-day in hitting each other's taste. Come, the port!"

This lucid judgment was acquiesced in by Sims, with a smile of the most lavish admiration, and the cloth being removed, the host began to push the bottle.

In vain have we collected all the fine things that transpired from this moment. The three friends were in considerable force, and the decanter circulated as briskly as a hat in a mountebank's ring. As the wine sank, their spirits rose; Mr. Sims so far forgot himself as to remember a song, and by ten o'clock there was not a happier gentleman of threescore in the four parishes.

Mr. Sims being now sufficiently far gone—ripe as his own Stilton, for the purpose—Elliston gave directions for a sedan chair to be in waiting, and collecting the crockery of the woollen-draper, which had lately graced the dinner-table, he placed the pyramidical pile on a wooden tray, flanking the edifice by the four black bottles they had just emptied.

All things being now in readiness, Mr. Sims, much against his inclination, was assisted into the chair, and being secured therein, the tray and porcelain, borne on the head of a porter, like a board of black plumes in advance of a solemn hearse, led the procession to the Abbey Churchyard. The body of Mr. Sims, dancing between the poles, came next in order, while Elliston and his friend, as chief mourners, brought up the rear. In this way they reached the mausoleum of the illustrious departed, and having "made wet their eyes with penitential tears," left the rites of sepulture to the care of Mrs. Green and Mrs. Blowflower.

Such was this *trait de gaieté*. What time elapsed before poor Mr. Sims could acquire courage to survey himself again in his glass, we have never been able to ascertain, nor has it yet reached our knowledge, when next he ventured to encounter, face to face, the chief of the Elliston family.

CHAPTER VII.

Humorous letter from Mr. Gore—Lord Nelson—Lady Hamilton—Early career of that lady—Adventure at Cocksheath Camp—A scene at Naples—Marinari, the painter—A scene of Magic—A bewildered Artist—Lady Hamilton and the Mussulman—Strange shifts in country play-houses—Elliston at Weymouth—A curious interview with his Majesty—Elliston loses the Liverpool theatre—Elliston in snug quarters—His landlord's wife—Love and Idleness.

ELLISTON, in the summer of 1802, received the following communication from his lively friend, Mr. Gore. It is written from Tenby; and it will be curious to notice the great change, which the little sea-port must have undergone, and its rapid progress towards a polite state, between the date of his letter and the present time.

"Never in my days, have I been so disappointed in a place as this. We have neither bread, meat, liquor, horses, conveyances, nor lodging. Alexander Selkirk was not more destitute. We have no clothing, but what we carry with us; no water, but the sea, and we must fish for our living. All power

of description, like the natives themselves, is positively beggared. I verily believe the Esquimaux, lately exhibited in London, to have been an imposture, and that the animal will turn out a mere 'Tenbyite' at last.

"I made a visit to the small isle of Caldy; it is throughout alive with rabbits, as a cheese is said to be with mites. Their multitudes might inspire even their pavid nature with courage to attack, and brought to my fancy the fate of that unhappy prisoner who, thrown into a blind dungeon, was in one night literally devoured with rats.

"I am in a hovel which is termed an hotel, with less accommodation than a roadside alehouse, and by no means so picturesque. One of the female natives acts in the capacity of landlady, a being resembling the 'Maid' in the comedy of 'Rule a Wife,' as our players are pleased to represent her; with great variety in her face, her eyes being of different colours, and the left side of her nose gone.

"I was yesterday witness to an exhibition which, though greatly ridiculous, was not wholly so, for it was likewise pitiable; and this was in the persons of two individuals who have lately occupied much public attention—I mean the Duke of Bronté, Lord Nelson, and Emma, Lady Hamilton. The whole town was at their heels as they walked together. The lady is grown immensely fat and equally coarse, while her 'companion in arms' had taken the other

extreme—thin, shrunken, and, to my impression, in bad health. They were evidently vain of each other, as though the one would have said, ' This is the Horatio of the Nile!' and the other, ' This is the Emma of Sir William!'

" Poor Sir William! wretched, but not abashed, he followed at a short distance, bearing in his arms a *cucciolo*, and other emblems of combined folly. You remember Hogarth's admirable subject, ' *Evening;*' it somewhat illustrates the scene I would describe.

"This distinguished trio are concluding a summer tour; but at Blenheim, I understand, they encountered a rebuff, which must have stung the hero to the quick, the noble family of that domain carefully avoiding any occurrence with the visitors of the mansion. Emma is reported to have said—' Nelson shall have a monument, to which Blenheim shall be but a pig-sty!' There is an insolent display about this person, which, while it is a scandal to her sex, must pain the heart of every Englishman, in its baneful dominion over the mind of so brilliant a commander and so sincere a lover of his country, as Nelson.

" After what I have said of Tenby, what think you of a theatre in the town? but such is no less the fact. Truly, it is no bigger than a bulky bathing machine, and bears about the same proportion to Sadler's Wells, as a silver penny to a Spanish

dollar. They play 'The Mock Doctor' to-night, and the Hero of the Nile is the subject of an Address."

Some months subsequent to this correspondence, Mr. Gore, in Elliston's presence, recurring to the subject of the above letter, related many incidents which had been well known to him, connected with the career of Lady Hamilton; some of which, not having made their appearance in memoirs since published of that extraordinary character, we will beg leave, *en passant*, to notice.

Emma Lyon, after quitting the service of the honest tradesman in St. James's Market, which must have been about the year 1777, passed into the family of Mr. Linley, the composer, where she first gave indications of strong natural talent for music, and had the benefit of initiatory instruction in an art, in which she afterwards so greatly excelled. Novels and romances, however, engrossing that attention which housemaids are expected to give to other studies, and the "Minerva Press" having gained an entire ascendency over the linen press, she was dismissed; and thus becoming her own mistress, made at least one step towards becoming the mistress of others.

That very pretty woman and clever actress, Mrs. Powell, was at this time, a servant in a family at Chatham Place, Blackfriars. The two damsels became acquainted, and being of similar dispositions,

their hearts were presently open to each other; and as these, together with their heels, were as light as might be, they started on what we should call at the present day "a lark," and in the capacity of ballad-singers, made their *entrée* at the Cocksheath camp.

Mr. Perry, who was afterwards proprietor of the "Morning Chronicle," with his friend Bish, subsequently director of the well-known lottery-office—young men at this period—made a similar excursion to this celebrated depôt, and in a sutler's booth fell in with the two adventurous girls.

The gentlemen were at once struck with their prompt wit and *séduisant* ease of deportment; and though they looked on them as ballad-singers of no common order, yet they verily believed them to be ballad-singers, having no suspicion of their rank, much less of their real elevation as housemaids. Unsuspecting as *Killigrew* and *Sidney** when at the playhouse, in the actual presence of the blonde *Jennings* and dazzling *Price*, equipped as saucy orange-girls, they were, nevertheless, not so careless of the *bonne fortune* which the adventure seemed to promise; but rather with the perseverance of *Rochester* and *Brounker*, they determined to trace the damsels to London; for it is nothing more than just to the character of the girls to mention that, they had ob-

* See "Memoirs of Count Grammont."

stinately refused a treat offered them to a tavern, and were now dexterously eluding their suitors, whom they began to look on as persecutors.

"Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloe," cried the baffled Perry, which, as Emma did not hear nor Bish understand, he might have spared. As to Bish himself, it was hard that *he* should lose a "prize," yet such appeared to be the fate which awaited both, when to their mortification they beheld the wenches suddenly mount a higgler's cart for the purpose of making their final escape.

This was a piece of generalship our cavaliers by no means expected. It was now half-past two on the following morning, and the creaking caravan had already commenced its journey. Perry and Bish had travelled to Cocksheath on horseback, and now, as on a sudden alarum "to arms," they had to seek their steeds. The stables were closed, and the ostler fast asleep, with the other cattle, within. However, by dint of thundering with their sticks and other indications of irritability, the man was roused to a half wakefulness; when, opening the door, he received a *coup de bâton* across his shoulders, which brought him to a due sense of animation. The *couchant* animals were started from their repose—the unoccupied beds at a neighbouring inn paid for—and within three quarters of an hour of the fugitives, *Robin Hood* and his companion were in full pursuit.

After a gallop of above an hour, during which not a word was exchanged, the horsemen pulled up, and Perry, with a look of ineffable concern, said, very wisely, "The jades have been over cunning for us, and have taken another road." Bish was too blown immediately to reply, but gave some pantomimic indication that he was much of the same opinion. They continued their course, however, at a foot pace, and after spending an hour at an ale-house, for the purpose of refreshing their horses, during which time they held their *pie-poudre* court in the highway, Bish taking his seat on a milestone, they resumed their journey towards London.

It was now nearly seven o'clock when our two friends, jaded and disappointed, had entered the Kent Road, and were approaching London Bridge, when a loud shout of merriment induced them simultaneously to turn about, and to their unspeakable delight they beheld the caravan, passengers complete, in the act of giving them the "go by."

All was again hope and activity. Suddenly the cart stopped, and out jumped one of the girls,—Emma,—when the vehicle as instantaneously jogged on towards the bridge. Bish's "prize" being still in the wheel, he stuck close to the caravan, while Perry directed all his attention towards the flying *Daphne*. In a twinkling he lost sight of her. What was to be done? He could not dismount, unless, indeed, at the price of his horse, which at

this period of his fortune he could ill afford to do. Wild with vexation, he looked on one side and on the other—paced backwards and forwards, expressing himself in terms that even startled the tired animal, which hardly sustained its master, with his additional weight of disappointment.

Being now on the centre of the bridge, and casting his eyes over the parapet, he descried Emma in a wherry, taking the down direction of the river. No sooner did she perceive he had discovered her, than she gave most distinct sounds of unbounded mirth, waving her ivory arms in token of victory. Ill-starred Perry! In a state of frenzy he sat grinding his teeth and threatening vain revenge; nor did he quit the spot, until he saw the little vixen safely ashore, whence she finally vanished amid the gloom of Wapping.

Such was the Cocksheath adventure; but *Robin Hood* and his ally were, in fine, amply recompensed for all their toil. Bish traced his damsel to her service in Bridge Street, where, if she did not put off the garb of a princess, she certainly resumed that of a *Cinderella;* through whom, a meeting, within a few days, was effected between Perry and Emma; and the twain, from this time, entered on the most agreeable interchange of favours.

Not long after the marriage of Sir William Hamilton with the witching Emma, Marinari, (who for upwards of forty years was accounted one of the

first scene painters in Europe, but who now, at the age of *four* score and ten, is lingering in extremest poverty in London,) made a visit to Naples, with letters of introduction to Sir William, the English ambassador, a man well known as a great patron of the arts, and of the most polished taste.

Sir William received the artist with affability, in his favourite studio. It was a chamber at the upper part of the house, without any apparent entrance, and entirely surrounded with looking-glass. Fancy and erudition were gratified with specimens of the choice antique, while nothing was wanting to administer to luxurious imaginings or fulfil the variety in actual enjoyment.

> "Sofas 'twas half a sin to sit upon,
> So costly were they;—carpets, every stitch
> Of workmanship so rare, they made you wish
> You could glide o'er them like a golden fish."

After some conversation on the arts, Sir William expressed a wish that Marinari would visit him the next day, for the purpose of taking a drawing of one of the finest models of the human form that his research had ever discovered.

Punctual to his appointment, and armed with the necessary implements for the work in question, the artist took his position in the hall of mirrors, patiently awaiting his more circumstantial instructions. After a short pause, seraphic sounds, first in soft

murmurs broke upon the ear—perfumes, sweeter than the violet, mounted to the delighted sense—harmony then, in the fulness of sound, proclaimed the scene at hand, and Emma Hamilton, attired as "Hebe," with as much drapery as poetry permits, but with an identity of person far transcending any child of song, glided from the secret opening of a glass panel, and stood before the bewildered painter.

The words of Sir William were verified to the letter. "Never had the artist witnessed a form so lovely, a grace so enchanting." In vain was he called on to his task imposed; he felt totally disarmed of all power of art, and the pencil he held, but a lifeless reed. Like the wily magician, Sir William watched in secret exultation, the working of his spell. "To your task!" said he. "Begin."

> "———— but her eyes,
> How could he see to do them? Having made one,
> Methinks it should have power to steal both his,
> And leave itself unfinished."

Again was the air gently agitated by the power of music,—now as though sweeping over the distant bay, and anon filling the attentive ear in richest fulness.

"'Tis a dream!—a vision!" exclaimed the half terrified painter. "Where, where am I?" And as he turned his gaze a moment from the scene,

the airy figure vanished as it came, and Hebe plunged again into the stream of mirrors. " Oh, forgive me my sins !" cried Marinari, like the bewildered *Trinculo*, as he tottered on his way from the enchanted chamber.

The magician, however, had not yet fully accomplished his purpose ; Marinari was still, that day, detained the ambassador's guest. A sumptuous entertainment succeeded, at which the modern *Thais* presided. Here, all that was most costly was most profusive. Imagination could suggest nothing which art had been unequal to supply to the demands of this house of joy—but the bleeding soil in which its foundations were laid, claimed not a sigh—not a thought ; nor were the united cries of trampled thousands for one moment heard, amidst the unpausing shout of insolent festivity.

As to poor Marinari, excess followed soon upon indulgence—bewildered with delight, he was now more mystified with the grape, and if the day commenced with illusion, the night closed in absolute forgetfulness. Like *Christopher Sly* he awoke the next morning in his own narrow cell, nor had he quite made up his mind between the substance and the shadow, when Sir William Hamilton accosted him with an English gripe, which left but little doubt on the question of identity.

Mr. Pryse Lockhart Gordon, who was well acquainted with Mr. Gore, related to him the

following incident to which he was an eye-witness.

Shortly after the flight of Ferdinand and his court to Sicily, a Turkish messenger arrived, bearing a despatch from the Emperor Paul to Lord Nelson, who was of course residing with the English ambassador.

The credentials having been sent to Corfu, and no Russian vessel being there at the time, the Turcoman had been employed to transport them. The tender-hearted Mussulman was a guest at the minister's table, and as his Excellency's rum came not under the prohibition of the Prophet, he shewed a liberality in Christian observances that had been rarely witnessed, for he got outrageously drunk—we cannot say without *hesitation*, for he was soon wholly inarticulate. When, however, but only "half seas," he entertained the party, through an interpreter, with an account of his exploits,—amongst others, that of having fallen in with a French transport, conveying invalids and wounded soldiers from Egypt, whom he had brought on board his frigate; but provisions running short, it was expedient to relieve himself from the burden of prisoners, which he did by deliberately putting them to death.

"Ha, ha!" cried he, flushed with the liquor, "with this brave blade I severed the heads of twenty Frenchmen in one day. See, the blood yet clings

to it!" Whereupon he passed his scymitar to the delighted Emma, who, receiving it in hands fairer than alabaster, examined the gory encrustation, as tenderly as she would a flower, and having imprinted a kiss upon the blade, and fervently blessed the deed, replaced the weapon in the scabbard of the appropriate warrior. Mr. Gordon was present at this entertainment.

It has been said that Lady Hamilton in her very early days was on the stage, and that she had been the "Miss Lyon" who appeared at the Haymarket Theatre as a ballad-singer, in the year 1781, in the pantomime of "Touchstone;" but for this there is no certain authority.

During the Bath recess, Elliston commenced manager of the pigmy theatres (we might have said bandboxes, but there were neither *band* nor *boxes*) of Wells and Shepton Mallet, where he played everything, from *Macbeth* to *Pantaloon*, so that he very fairly might have been considered a host in himself.

On one occasion he made the extraordinary experiment of sustaining the two parts of *Richard* and *Richmond* in the same drama, and this he executed with the most amusing dexterity. *Richmond*, it will be remembered, makes his *entrée* in the last act of the play, when the scenes become alternate, in which the king and the earl are before the audience. On making his exit as *Richard*, Elliston

dropped his hump from his shoulder, as he would a knapsack, and straightening his leg with the facility of a posture-master, slipped into a bit of pasteboard armour, and, galeated with fresh head-gear, went through the heroic lines of the Tudor prince. Well might the interpolation have been forgiven, "*Myself am to my own turned enemy!*" Going off on the other side of the stage, he was expeditiously again invested with his bison shape, and thrusting a sheet of music into his stocking, was again the vindicator of the Yorkist rose.

In this way he carried through the scenes until the last; and when the field was to be decided by personal collision, shifted was the pasteboard to the body of a shifter of scenes, who, being enjoined to say nothing, but fight like a devil, was thus enabled to bear the drama successfully to a close; in which, so far from "six Richmonds in the field," there had not been one; and as to Richard, if "deformed," he was indeed "unfinished," and not unfrequently "but half-made up."

Elliston, active in body as well as mind, in the heyday of youth and spirits, positively gloried in these little shifts and hindrances, transmuting all dilemmas into rosy laughter, by an alchemy peculiar to his own genius; and in carrying with success any difficulty like that just recorded, he felt incomparably greater delight, than though the affair had gone smoothly from the commencement.

His love of fun often got the better of his sense of dignity; and when it is remembered that this latter organ was pretty strongly developed in the character of Robert William, his love of fun must, at times, have been indeed exuberant. He acted *Macbeth* and *Harlequin*, *Hamlet* and the *Clown;* so that by the time he had closed his profitless campaign at Shepton Mallet and Wells, it is a question whether his own characters had not outnumbered his audience.

It is recorded in the Memoirs of Macklin, that that singular actor once played the part of *Mercutio;* the reader might as nearly have suspected Dr. Johnson of the experiment. But whatever Elliston did he did well, and in many instances in these *amateur* experiments, he overtopped the original in his own "line of business."

Such was the state of affairs in Somersetshire—light in pocket as in heart—when Elliston was summoned, somewhat suddenly, to Weymouth, as the king had again visited that place, and had expressed his pleasure respecting our popular comedian. Elliston thereon, like *Duke Vincentio*, delegates the principalities of Wells and Shepton Mallet to Egan, his trusty *Angelo*. "Be thou at full ourself," said he; "take thy commission." But here all parallel ceases, for the grand *Duke* Elliston never deemed it worth while to resume possession of his dominions; and if vicegerent Egan did behave ill to the ladies,

in his master's absence, he certainly was never called to account for his misdemeanors.

Elliston, on his re-appearance at Weymouth, had the happiness of finding he had lost no portion of his Majesty's favour, since last he had had the honour of acting before the royal party. *Young Marlow*, *Wilding*, and *Tag*, were amongst the several characters, in which he was fortunate in pleasing the king; and at his benefit, his Majesty being present, Elliston introduced his daughter Eliza, then only five years old, in a dance; on which occasion, Mrs. Elliston and her sister also made their appearance in the same ballet of action. This was entitled the "Temple of Fame," composed expressly by Mrs. Elliston, quite as full of loyalty as poetry—"Peace, the offspring of British valour!"—"King George," an illuminated medallion, with a transparent young woman *volante*, above his shoulders, blowing the only trumpet in the playhouse. An additional stanza to "God Save the King," telling regenerate France what she was to expect, should she ever again dare to meet the British lion in arms, terminated the interesting occasion.

His Majesty this season frequently conversed with Elliston—whenever, in fact, he visited the theatre; and as this was pretty often, our comedian seemed fulfilling the notion of the celebrated French actor, Baron, who was wont to say, that tragic actors should be fondled in the arms of princes.

It being Elliston's property as a "star" to light the king through the narrow mazes of "all the world"—namely, the "stage," it was by no means below the dignity of Majesty to hold communion with his astral guide. George the Third was a good king, and consulted his stars; and although he frequently put more questions to them in a breath, than they could reply to in a night, yet it was sufficient to shew he duly acknowledged their intendency.

"Well, well, Elliston," said he; "where—where have you been acting lately?"

"At Wells and Shepton Mallet, your Majesty, in which places I was manager."

"Manager—manager! that wont do—that wont do, eh, Charlotte? Managers go to the wall—get the worst of it." Her Majesty graciously vouchsafed a smile on the attendant comedian.

"It *didn't* do, your Majesty. At Wells I was particularly unfortunate."

"At Wells—Wells!" replied the king, good humouredly, "'mongst the bishops! quite right—quite right; no business with bishops, eh, Charlotte?" Her Majesty here turned a look of slight rebuke upon her lord—"Bishops don't go to plays—no business at plays—you, none with them. Well, well, where next?"

"I returned to Weymouth, where I have redeemed everything, in the honour of serving your Majesty."

"Eh, eh?" responded the king, in the same affability of tone and manner—"What, kings better than bishops, eh?—found it out—found it out, Elliston?"

By this time their Majesties had entered the carriage, and the king having taken his seat, cried out, while the horses were withheld one moment to his signal, "Bishops and managers—both a mistake—ought to have known better—eh, eh, Elliston?" and away they drove.*

* The royal house of Brunswick had always been attached to theatrical amusements. George II., notwithstanding his imperfect knowledge of the English language, was still fond of going to the play. His Majesty was at Drury Lane Theatre when the Culloden despatches were presented to him. The instant his Majesty had opened them the happy intelligence transpired, and Garrick directed the national anthem to be sung, in which the whole audience joined.

Frederick of Wales, his son, directed Mrs. Devenish (whose first husband was Rowe, the poet) to prepare an edition of Rowe's dramatic works, for the benefit of the young princes, who were in the habit of acting plays at Leicester House. These were under the direction of Quin. The graceful manner in which Prince George delivered his first speech from the throne, impelled this celebrated actor to exclaim, "Ah, I taught that boy to speak!"

On the 4th Jan. 1749, the children of his royal highness, with the aid of some juvenile branches of the nobility, performed the tragedy of "Cato," before the court—and the following was the cast:—

Portius.....Prince George.	*Sempronius*..Master Evelyn.
Juba.....Prince Edward.	*Decius*.....Lord Milsington.
Cato.....Master Nugent.	*Marcia*....Princess Augusta.
Lucius.....Master Montague.	*Lucia*.....Princess Elizabeth.

But neither the gracious hint of the king, the repeated caution of the earl, nor Elliston's own observation on the fate of managers, could restrain him long from a purpose which had gained so powerful a hold on him, as that to which we have alluded. His "ventures were not in one bottom trusted, nor to one place."

Frank Aicken ("Tyrant" Aicken, as he was called, for the *direct* reason that, by *metathesis*, a later gentleman has been denominated "Tender," namely, from constantly playing the parts of iron-hearted despots and flinty fathers) had rented, for some years, the Liverpool Theatre, and his lease being now about to expire, printed conditions had been circulated in March, for the purpose of re-letting it.

The building was now considerably enlarged, and rendered fitting and commodious to meet the convenience of the increased population of this town; but the covenants to which the new lessee was rendered subject, were far from liberal or tempting. The rent, from 350*l.* per annum, was raised to 1500*l.* Each subscriber or proprietor, to the number of thirty, to be entitled to a free transferable ticket, which was to be delivered every morning at the holder's residence, whilst the new lessee was curtailed of many privileges, which had hitherto been enjoyed by preceding tenants.

Elliston was amongst the first in the field, and in

this instance preferred consulting his uncle, before whom, he placed so clear and impartial a statement of the question, that the Doctor agreed to become security for two years' rent—namely, 3000*l.* The candidates were, however, numerous and respectable, and the fair prospect of future theatrical prosperity, in a town justly esteemed for spirit and liberality, occasioned considerable competition. The old "Tyrant" offered a larger rent than the sum proposed; but the election ultimately fell on the united bidding of Lewis and T. Knight, who, like *Hippias* and *Hipparchus*, now succeeded to the joint investiture of Attic sovereignty.

The prosperity which attended the career of these gentlemen, very naturally occasioned much chagrin on the part of Elliston, that he had been thus baffled on a point which he had so ardently pursued: the speculation terminated very profitably to both Lewis and Knight. They continued lessees till their death; and one of Lewis's family held the theatre until within the last few years, when he retired from the toils of management on a handsome independence.

At one of Elliston's visits to Liverpool, during this negotiation, he took up his quarters at a remarkably neat and well-appointed inn; and finding the landlord a good-humoured fellow, he requested permission to take pot-luck within the bar, as it

would relieve him from the care of ordering his own dinner, and the family hour of two o'clock answered admirably the daily suggestions of his appetite. In this he met with far better success than in his theatrical tenders, for his terms were at once accepted; and so far from any stringent conditions being fixed on the agreement, he met with many indulgences which his new friend, in the two-fold capacity of host and husband, seemed willing to concede him.

The fact was, the landlord's wife was an extremely merry creature, with considerable pretensions to beauty, or at least prettiness, and a very positive example of the homely benison,—"Laugh and grow fat." Elliston, though a *volage* in love, to do him justice, had no design, in the first instance, more *spirituel* than the beef-pudding which constituted the first day's repast; but this *might* have arisen from his total ignorance, at that time, of his landlord being wedded to anything but his business; and now that he discovered "a pretty woman," as it were "purposely thrown in his way," we trust our readers will deal mercifully with him, as he had not a single friend at hand, from whom he could borrow a shred of morality.

Amidst the coarser wares of Liverpool, this *commerce de galanterie* was undoubtedly agreeable, and tended materially to beguile his anxiety during the undetermined theatrical lesseeship—for he was here,

in the best sense, a tenant-at-will, under no obligations to uphold, while all repairs would naturally fall on his landlord. In truth, he passed sundry days, off and on, as it is called, at this very hostel; and whatever business he might have pleaded in the morning, there was at least nothing fictitious in his amusement in the afternoon.

"No man is a hypocrite in his pleasures," says Dr. Johnson; and when frequently our gay comedian, engaged either at backgammon with his twinkling hostess, or telling fortunes from the sixpenny catechism, declared himself the most enviable fellow in the parish, he verily said what he thought. The house was, however, well-ordered; for the good landlord seemed to be quite aware that, if his wife were neglected, *that* defection could easily be supplied; but if the affairs of the house were disregarded, the remedy might not be so readily at hand. He was, therefore, sedulously attentive to business, his only recreation being in the manufacture of artificial flies for trout-fishers—a piece of art in which he was content to excel. As to his little blue-eyed wife, the only duty that devolved on her, was that of scolding the maids, for which office, however, her happy temper rendered her totally unfit.

A trifling incident took place in the course of this pleasant *delassement*, which may serve to explain how thoroughly the domestic sky is influenced by

the elementary qualities of the individuals themselves, and unquestionably proving,

> " Marriage is a thing, I take it,
> Just as the parties choose to make it."

Elliston had been playing—" his custom of an afternoon"—a hit at backgammon with the sprightly mistress of the neatest house of entertainment in Liverpool, and for the most satisfactory of all possible stakes —namely, kisses, (for whether you win or lose, it comes to pretty nearly the same thing,) and having been singularly unfortunate in his throws, was in the very act of paying his debts, like a gentleman, when the door gently opening, *Boniface* himself entered the apartment.

Great and immediate was the confusion, but it was a sense our losing gamester had the undivided impression of, for the frolic of a kitten could scarcely have been less an operation of disregard to the married pair, than this identical *contretemps*. which has been the darling *coup de scène* of half the comedies from the days of Congreve to the new piece of yesterday.

But, in point of fact, the landlord (mild as our old acquaintance " Mr. Tow-wouse") had no eyes at his disposal, the only pair he was possessed of, being nervously fixed on a tumbler of brandy-and-water, which he held at that very moment in custody, the contents whereof being just level with the rim,

demanded all the dexterity he was master of for its level preservation. And having now taken a lump of sugar from a corner cupboard, and thrown the same into a thimble glass, he took his departure as calmly as he entered, for the purpose of conveying the steaming mixture into the "Commercial Room." As to the lady, the effect produced was equally unworthy particular remark—she chuckled, and uttered, "Droll man!" so that Elliston was at once relieved from the necessity of a speech, which no doubt would have been clear and satisfactory as the explanation of *Joseph Surface* himself.

The reader being now pretty conscious of the Italian sky under which this wedded pair had consented to live, may have some apprehension for the fair fame of our hero, seeing that like fire which had once reached the first floor of the building, there was some danger threatening the thatch; but we are by no means prepared, by any evidence we at present have, to lead them to such painful conclusions. At the same time, we would earnestly counsel our host of the "Star," that people who sleep with their doors unfastened, cannot expect to be so secure as they who bar them up; while, on the other hand, for the "actor's benefit," we would also advise him, that it has been decided, over and over again, by the highest legal authority, that he who raises only the latch, commits as clear a felony as he who passes the threshold.

We will now beg leave to break up the party, particularly as the above, may not be the only interview our readers may have with these good-natured individuals, in the course of these Memoirs. We may be permitted, however, to notice, that at the period of Christmas, for seven years following this event, Mrs. Elliston received a full-sized hamper, containing the best produce of St. John's market, as a friendly gift from her husband's pleasant acquaintances in Liverpool.

[At the short peace with France in this year (1802), Mr. Kemble paid a visit to Paris. The following is from a French paper at the time :—

" Mr. Kemble, the celebrated actor of London, whose arrival at Paris has been announced by all the papers, is a fine figure, and appears to be from 36 to 40 years of age. His hair dark, and the marked character of his features, give him a physiognomy truly tragic. He understands and speaks perfectly well the French language, but in company he is thoughtful and incommunicative. His manners are, however, very distinguished, and he has in his look an expression of courtesy that gives us the best idea of his education. The Comedie Française has received him with the respect due to the Lekain of England."]

CHAPTER VIII.

Haymarket Theatre—Foote's Patent—Sharp correspondence between Colman and Elliston—Declaration, Plea, and Rejoinder, Surrejoinder — Issue — Dimond — His history — Blissett, humours of—Some account of him—His own history of the Bath theatre—Elliston baffled at Oxford—Correspondence with the Vice-Chancellor—Mr. Gore—Escourt, the player—A curious anecdote respecting him—An innocent youth—A happy escape.

At the close of the Haymarket season, in September, 1802, Colman's deputed manager, Fawcett, in his farewell address, said—

"That when a royal patent was about to be granted to the late Mr. Foote, it was inquired, with that justice which characterizes the British throne, what annual extent of term might be allowed him, without injury to the winter theatres. With their consent, it was fixed to be from the 15th of May to the 15th of September, and a patent for life was granted to Foote for that period. Foote's entertainments were unique. He depended principally on his own writing and personal acting.

"At his death, a licence was granted to the elder

Colman, on similar terms; but aware that he could not, like his singularly gifted predecessor, depend on his own individual accomplishments, he engaged a regular company of comedians, selected from the two winter theatres; and as they had since encroached on the Haymarket season, he was compelled to wait until those theatres closed, for the assistance of the actors. To obviate this evil, was the present object. The proprietor, therefore, anxiously solicits public support, in his endeavours to establish a perfectly independent company.

"There is no theatrical town in the kingdom that will not be resorted to for procuring the best talent for all departments. In addition to new authors, you will be entreated, early in the season, to continue your indulgence to the proprietor's further attempts in dramatic composition, whose pen he humbly hopes is not yet thoroughly worn down in your service."

Some days before making his intentions public, Colman entered into a correspondence with Elliston, which turned out more voluminous than necessary for the reader. We shall, therefore, give it only in part. Colman writes as follows:—

"Accident has snapped our intercourse, which I hope may become more sound by splicing. I can truly say, my wishes for the increase of your professional prosperity and private happiness have never abated.

"My present purpose is to offer you an engagement at the Haymarket; but to suit *me*, it must be for a longer duration than any of our former agreements—and such, I trust, may suit *you*. In short, we must meet on the Haymarket ground next year for four months, or not at all. It is my intention to open the house on the 15th of May, with an independent company, which I am confident I can procure from the provinces, to support the new efforts of my pen which has been so long smoke-dried in London.

"As I know not what may be your own views for the future, or what sacrifices you might make in coming to me, take, for the present, the following general outline of agreement—articles, if you please, for *three years;* a weekly salary of 12*l.*, and a benefit. Your business will be that of a performer of the first rank in the company. Remember, you have eight months of the year at your own disposal, during which you will of course, not be idle. Pray send me a line by return—and if we cannot meet very speedily, be full in everything you may have to suggest."

To this a long correspondence succeeded on the subject. Elliston, like the paper on which he wrote, was "Bath superfine;" but his line of argument was business-like:—

"Had I," he says, "voluntarily offered you a commodity for purchase, I might have been ex-

pected, perhaps, to accept the terms you have named; but as you come to me, who am no willing seller, on your own exigencies, you have no right to complain of my demands, even should you fancy they exceed the real value of the article. Such an understanding is always allowed, in the positions we hold to one another. It is like money—money is more valuable at one time than another, to a certain party; and if this be your case, and you will have it, why you must pay for it. I have already invested the capital of my professional attraction here with 'Bath, Bristol, and Co.,' and 'I must sell out at an amazing loss' to satisfy you. This is usurious language; but I cannot apply the metaphor to one who will better understand its force, than George Colman."

Again, he says,—

"The terms you have offered me are liberal; and when I object, I do it, not from a belief that I am a better actor than some you have hitherto engaged, but that circumstances have made me more attractive. If that attraction were a mop-stick without a head, still the mutilated piece of furniture would be worthy its results. Some years since, you gave me a clear benefit and twenty guineas per week, for my eight weeks—I am now to come to you, with more experience and greater fame, on a less remuneration. I shall take all the risk, while you grow fat upon the cream of the dairy."

He concluded by asking twenty pounds per week and a clear benefit. But,

"Wits are game-cocks to one another."

The "mop-stick" produced the following rejoinder—

"You tell me I have made you a liberal offer, and yet you demand a great deal more—now a foot beyond liberality seems to me a stride beyond common sense; and he who demands such a stride, takes no less than a hop, step, and a jump, himself.

"I cannot call you a mop-stick, and I am quite sure you are not without a head; but while you were with me, as a new broom, you never swept money into my treasury in proportion to the price with which you have ticketed yourself. If you should again take a brush in the Haymarket, what you carried off before, is nothing to the present business, or rather, is an argument against your proposal.

"That you have more fame is undeniable; but it is that country fame of which the good London people know and care as little as may be. But it is past a doubt that, you would have left the metropolis with a currency of fame payable on demand everywhere, had you kept your account in the Haymarket instead of going to Covent Garden. If I, in a new and hazardous speculation, accede to your lofty terms, I cannot conceive how you will take all the risk, nor (since at Covent Garden you kicked down

a little of the milk) how I am to get all the cream of the dairy. Did it never occur to you that, as some of your reasons for swelling your demands were grounded on the fear of future loss, if that loss did not occur, you should refund something of your profits in the Haymarket? This, my good friend, I fear, has never entered that head which you certainly have.

"Let us now go to work again; I want you, and have fairly told you so—the following is my ultimatum. Fourteen pounds per week, and a clear benefit, as a performer; a benefit for your assistance in the business relating to the stage—to cease after one season, or proceed for three, at *my* option, not *yours*. As assistant stage-manager, your business will be lighter than that of your predecessor, who had much to do during the winter."

To this Elliston sur-rejoins:—

"It is the privilege of wit to trifle with the understanding, but it is the part of plain reason to deal with it fairly. To the former I have no pretensions, but to the other I have some little—quite enough to enter on the field against George Colman.

"I deny that the refusal of a liberal offer is an inconsistency, or your stepping further would be a stride beyond common sense. May not an offer be liberal, and yet not equal to the just claims of the party to whom it is made? This is neither stride nor stretch, but certainly so clear that he who run may read.

"Since, with that harlequinade for which you are so famous, you have turned the mop into a broom, I shall beg to take the birch in hand, and for your chastisement observe, that you should have thought twice before uttering so strange a declaration, as country fame being neither known nor cared for by the Londoners. Pray what was the substance of your own address at the close of your season? That you would make application in all the principal provincial theatrical towns, for the best talent they could produce, on the *very fact* of these precise places being the long acknowledged nursery for English actors!"

After sundry other recapitulations, Elliston concludes his letter by accepting the terms which Colman had offered in his last:

"But," says he, "I still maintain my right of choice at the end of the first season; it is only just. Let this treaty follow that of *Amiens* in March last, and I will sign with 'George' in London!

"One word further—on the day of our contract, a bottle of Madeira and a beef-steak;—mem., the latter, like our women here, delicately dressed, and extremely tender."

In the meantime, Elliston took occasion earnestly to recommend Blissett to Colman's attention.

"Be assured," says he, "you ought not to miss sight of him; he is a sterling actor. His *Falstaff*, *Lord Duberly*, *Old Rapid*, and *Lope Tocho*, are all

inimitable; the former, would, I think, be highly attractive."

Of this "sterling actor" and eccentric man, we will beg to give some account, as he was but little known during his day in the metropolis, Bath having been *literally* the great theatre of his action.

William Wyatt Dimond and Francis Blissett originally tramped into the city of Bath together, which by the time they had reached, they were nearly barefooted. Like *Roderick Random* and his friend *Strap*, they got an occasional lift by some wagon, and on a certain stock of patience, their only resources, commenced the work of their future fortunes. Blissett was quite an eccentric, but his eccentricities were harmless, and gave an additional interest to a character otherwise meritorious. When Dimond, in after days, had become the director of the theatre, and Blissett himself in the way of prosperity, the latter invited his manager to a little entertainment at his lodgings, and in the course of the evening observed—

"This day, friend, is the anniversary of our entering Bath together; it was bleak and chilly as our prospects—I well remember it; and to-day is likewise cheerful as our prosperity. I'll introduce you to an old acquaintance"—saying which, he produced a pair of old shoes, literally worn through.

"See! here they are," cried he, "the only friends I had at the time, save yourself; they bore

me safely here, and I shall keep them till I die. I could almost wish to be buried in these shoes."

Sometime after this he took occasion to intimate to his manager, in terms sufficiently positive, that it was his intention of withdrawing from the company, unless he had an increase of salary.

"Nay, nay, my old friend," replied Dimond; "not so, I trust. You already receive the highest salary which is given in Bath—three pounds a-week; we cannot exceed it, and I am happy in knowing you do not want it."

"It may be so," answered Blissett, doggedly; "but unless I am complied with, I quit the theatre!"

"You are somewhat abrupt," responded Dimond, evidently nettled; "the season is already——"

"——I'll have it!" interrupted Blissett, striking the table with his hand.

"What, then, do you demand?" asked the manager.

"*Three guineas!*" exclaimed the actor, with an energy irresistibly humorous. "I'll have them, or I go."

"And so you shall," rejoined Dimond, not a little amused,—"and in consideration of our new piece last week, the increase shall begin from that time," saying which, he drew three shillings from his pocket, and paid them over to his peremptory friend.

Blissett was a kind of amateur chapman, and had a great fancy for cheapening small articles on sale, of whatever description they might be. He would, in fact, buy or sell anything within his reach, and as not unfrequently his personal chattels became objects of sudden transfer or alienation, the effect was often ludicrous enough.

He would leave his abode at the early part of the day in one coat, and return in another, which second he had picked up in exchange during his ramble. A dozen pair of knee-buckles have passed through his hands, in the course of a single month; and he has even been known to part with the very brass buttons off his coat, whose places have been supplied by less arrogant mother-of-pearl.

On one occasion, he arrived at the theatre without a hat, having sold his only one in the course of his walk, and had not yet selected another. Everything appertaining to him was open to a bargain, except his good name, and a certain pair of old shoes, which last, like "Sir Oliver's" picture, "he would keep as long he had a room to hang them in." Elliston himself accidentally crossed him in one of these fanciful expeditions; meeting the humorist in the neighbourhood of Milsom-street, with a tea-caddy under one arm, and "Dodsley's Poems," together with an oil-skin umbrella, tucked under the other; these, it appears, he had bartered, giving in exchange a pair of pistols and a punch-bowl.

Blissett's career had been a course of hard labour and endurance. The hardships and privations he underwent in Ireland, were perhaps even more severe than those usually the lot of strolling players; but he lived to meet the reward of patience and industry, for no actor, not even Elliston himself, was a greater favourite in Bath; and though he never became rich, in the acceptation of the world, yet he attained something more enviable, namely, the affluence of content and the estate of public esteem.

William Woodfall, who had been one of Blissett's earliest friends, negotiated an engagement for him at Covent Garden Theatre, about the year 1770, but which Blissett deemed it prudent to decline.

In 1777, he accepted an offer at the Haymarket, where he continued for above four seasons, and on the 18th of May, 1803, by the earnest recommendation of Elliston (as we have seen), Blissett, after an estrangement of so many years, appeared at the same theatre, in the character of *Falstaff*. During the season, he played many of his favourite parts, but once only repeated *Falstaff*.

He was now upwards of sixty years of age, and the bustle of a metropolitan theatre, ill agreeing with one so long accustomed to the quietude and routine of the Bath system, he made his final bow in London at the close of this single season, and returned, with unfeigned satisfaction, to his original

friends. In 1812, Blissett retired altogether from the stage, closing his career with the unsullied character of an honest man, and with the good wishes of all who resembled himself.

He died at Bath in 1824.

To this slight notice of an actor, who was so eminent a favourite in that place, where he was chiefly known, we will beg leave to subjoin a letter, addressed by him to a leading comedian of the present day. It will be read, we are assured, with much interest :—

"My good Friend,—You wish some historical account of the Bath theatre, from which place, for me, 'there is but one stage more,' (in the words of Bishop Juxon to Charles the Martyr,) nor shall I repine, unless it be the regret that I might have fulfilled my duty better.

"Who the first Bath manager was I cannot pretend to say, but I believe '*Gentleman*,' alias '*Copper Captain*' Brown. Mr. Griffith, of the Norwich theatre, followed. Next came Arthur, who was a great comic actor, and to him succeeded Keasberry. Henderson arrived under this reign, thirty years ago—a clumsy Dutch figure, but with a very strong understanding. He went by the name of *Courtney*, and was a most stickling imitator of Garrick. Yet with all his disadvantages, I think he read and

played *Hamlet* better than your present *king*.* His salary was the trifling sum of one guinea per week; so that he was wont jokingly to say to his friends, he should certainly grow rich, as he had a guinea a week, a benefit in the dog-days, and Keasberry to teach him acting! But his good sense soon freed him from the Garrick trammels, and, like a discreet painter, who had too long copied the ancients with pedantry, retained at last only their beauties, to which he added a fancy and manner of his own.

" Mr. Dimond came soon after this gentleman; he had acted at Drury Lane the part of *Romeo*, under the direction of Garrick. His respectability and gentle behaviour soon gained him many friends at Bath, in which place he became quite as great a favourite as Elliston is at present. Mr. Dimond was lucky in marrying a lady with a good estate, with which he purchased a part of the theatre, and there is not an actor who can sit uneasy under the sweet shade of his government. *Blissett*, (*ipsissimus*,) who was born at Reading, was thrust upon the world at the age of thirteen. He *would* be an actor, and came out under the management of Bobby Bates, at Shepton Mallett, but was soon after shipped off by Little Derrick, the then *M. C.* of Bath, to Smock Alley. This was the period in which Mr. and Mrs. Didier, Mr. Edwin, Mr. Richards, (the present Mrs. Edwin's

* Kemble.

father,) Miss Catley, and several others, made their debût in Dublin.

"Much could I say of Mossop, but he would occupy more time than I can just now afford. We literally starved the whole season. I am quite sure, that had we been put into the scales at the end of it, we should not have weighed half our original ounces—and we never were a sleek company at best.

"I then followed the fortunes of an itinerant manager, the famous Fisher, who went to Russia. From him I went to Edinburgh, with Ross—thence to Birmingham, and at length to Bath.

"And now, with something less than an annual sum of 200*l.*, I quit the chequered scene of a player's life—a woof in which, if there be but few bright colours, I have found some threads of friendship and attachment, which are yet strong and binding. If you think my experience can yield you anything useful, command me, my good friend."

Elliston's heavy professional duties at Bath, his occasional acting in other theatres, and the prospect of fresh labours awaiting him at the Haymarket, in

London, might have satisfied him, it would be thought, for the present. But no such thing—the comedian, like the sentimental young lady, was formed "to shine in adversity," and yearned for the sweets of martyrdom. His engagements were many, but their current was too smooth, too unruffled, for his sense of the picturesque; and having just learnt of the many fruitless attempts, which had been made by dramatic managers for permission to import plays and players into the University of Oxford, he determined at once to enter himself on the hazard, and to carry with success, a point in which all his predecessors had failed.

To Lord Harcourt, he applies, as usual, and, as usual, the Earl responds in the most condescending and friendly manner:—

"Harcourt House, Feb. 19, 1803."

"SIR,—You may have formed a higher notion of my influence in the University of Oxford than I possess; for although my family has for six centuries been settled in its neighbourhood, I received no part of my education in that place.

"Having, however, many friends resident there, I may be of some assistance in the promotion of your plan. I have already endeavoured to interest in your favour, a leading member of the University, who will be informed of your family connexions, and

of the manner in which you have been educated, as well as the correctness of your private conduct; and, if it be necessary, I will add my testimony to your excellence in that profession, by which you are publicly known.

"But should your application meet with success, I do not see how you can carry on your project, with certain other engagements which you tell me you have entered into. Every man knows, or is supposed to know, his own affairs best; and although I am well aware you can perform many parts by your single talent, I cannot see how you can be in two places at once, with all your ability.

"HARCOURT.

"Mr. Elliston, Milsom-street, Bath."

In this respect, as in all his promises, the earl was as good as his word; but the importation of modern stage plays into the bosom of this antique seat of learning was not so easy an experiment.

The Universities have ever looked with prescriptive awe on the acting drama; and however inconsistent this may be, remembering their extreme tenderness in respect of many usages, which so holy and vigilant a body might have been roused to suppress, yet with them, usage has a high authority, and great is the respect to the laying on of hands of Time.

The negotiation being opened, Elliston received the following notice:—

"Oxford, Pembroke College, Feb. 19, 1803.

"SIR,—The Vice-Chancellor having lately lost his mother, prevented me from conversing with him on the subject of your letter till yesterday.

"His reply is, that no plays will be allowed to be acted in the University next summer. He told me that he had received several applications on the same subject previous to yours, and if it were possible to grant permission on this occasion, the preference would be given to your respectability and professional talents.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"JOHN VINICOMBE."

This announcement from Pembroke appears by no means to have settled the question with Elliston. He still follows up his object; and in consequence of a second attempt, receives the annexed gentle rebuke from the Vice-Chancellor himself:—

"Worcester College, Oxford, March 5th, 1803.

"SIR,—I am sorry you should have taken the trouble of repeating your application to me, after the reasons which I thought it my duty to give to Mr. Vinicombe, for declining to comply with your request.

"The manner in which Mr. Vinicombe spoke of you, could leave me no room to doubt of the respectability of your character. It is not, therefore, for want of confidence in that, that I did then, and still must, withhold my consent to the coming of any persons to this place, for the purpose of making theatrical exhibitions. If I could consent to any, I should not object to your application; but it is my determination to consent to none.

"I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

And thus terminated the Oxford experiment.

The introduction of theatrical amusements into our Universities, appears as forbidding as theatrical speculations were once deemed hazardous in Scotland; for we remember to have heard that, in the year 1726, one Tony Aston spoke a prologue in that country, written by Allan Ramsay, in which he compared himself to "Columbus," in the danger of so great an enterprise.

Mr. Gore, in his fondness for the drama, had, from time to time, collected much theatrical anecdote, with many biographical notices of performers —the greater part, perhaps, of which, the public, through other channels, are already in possession of.

The following incident, however, which may not

be so generally known, we take the occasion which now presents itself of relating.

Escourt was a celebrated player in the latter day of the seventeenth century. When quite a boy, he decamped from paternal authority, and enlisted under the banners of a theatrical leader. He was but fifteen years of age, when, at Worcester, he acted the part of *Roxana*, in the play of "Alexander the Great;" his feminine appearance being at that time a greater recommendation than his immature skill as an actor.

To this place he was traced by his enraged parent, who would evidently have commuted his dramatic salary into a sound whipping, but the manager's wife taking compassion on him, furnished him with an entire suit of her own clothes, and thus equipped, he escaped for the second time.

Arriving at Chipping Norton, he entered an inn. Fear and fatigue induced him to seek an early bed, to which, in a remote attic, he had not long retired, when the busy landlady, abruptly entering, begged that, as the house was full of travellers, "the young gentlewoman" would accept a companion for the night. Poor Escourt hereupon gave consent in that language which is said always to imply it—namely, silence—which the hostess deeming quite sufficient, handed up a third personage, and hastily quitted the apartment to attend on far more profitable customers below.

Dread, rather than delight, occupied the young runaway—dread, soon converted into utter dismay, when, on stealthily raising his eyes from the bed-covering, he descried a toothless, beetle-eyed antique, " swart, like my shoe, but her face nothing like so clean." The lad could have crept into a very nutshell, and rolling himself into as small a compass as possible, withdrew to the edge of the pallet, still counterfeiting sleep.

After a laborious fit of coughing and ventriloquizing, the distempered crone approached the bed, and loosening by degrees portions of her attire, scrambled on that division of the couch which the trembling boy had so liberally allotted her. With a heavy groan down she lay, whilst deeper horrors than the tyranny of *Mezentius* ever devised, filled the thoughts of her companion. The wheeze was soon lost in more distinct accents of sleep, which, though but little grateful to the ear of him who watched so near, yet somewhat relieved him from the terrors of detection and consequent punishment.

But terror—pain itself—will yield to fatigue, and as Damiens himself is said to have even slept upon the rack, so, as the morning approached, exhausted by long suffering, the younger of the twain fell also into a profound slumber.

But the grey-eyed morn had scarcely winked on the denizens of earth, when the *couchant* travellers

of the " Rampant Lion" were roused to a sense of alarm by a shriek hoarser than the raven ; and, at the same moment, a sudden overthrow of a water-butt and pewter vessel on the staircase, which presently set the whole establishment into the wildest commotion.

Young Escourt, it may be well supposed, was startled with no less affright, and in confused recollection of the late events, missing his *belle affiancée* of the over night, was about springing from his bed, when renewed accents bursting through the bondage of a well-remembered wheeze, exclaimed,

" Abomination on your house ! help ! help ! I say. You nest of rogues and varlets ! help ! help ! I say !"

It was now clear, that by some strange accident the poor youth had been discovered, and totally unconscious of the ludicrous evidence of moral turpitude fixed upon him, recollecting only his filial disobedience and its probable consequences, he fell on his knees just as the landlady, followed by half the household, entered the apartment, avowing himself a most guilty wretch, but claiming pity and protection.

The good hostess mistaking the nature both of his distress and confession, as well she might, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, in which she was joined by the whole *posse* at her heels. Fur-

ther explanations, however, took place; the unconscious libertine was acquitted, and, provided with fresh disguise, was again forwarded on his flight.

[Henry Twisleton Elliston, born Jan. 14th, 1802—godfather, Hon. Charles James Twisleton.]

CHAPTER IX.

Elliston's tragedy, a critical notice on his quality—Hamlet—The Stranger—Rolla—Orestes—Edgar—Amintor—Romeo—A benefit—Humorous letter of Colman—Journey to London—A break down, &c.—Elliston meets with his first love—Misfortunes and tears—The history of poor Alice—Strange recognition—Elliston acts *Richard III.* at the Haymarket—"Love laughs at locksmiths"—Rupture with Colman—Domestic calamity—Elliston "at home"—The Three Graces—Elliston a *maitre de danse.*

As the subject of these memoirs is now about to bid farewell to the home of his dramatic youth, in which he had been nurtured for ten years, having attained the manhood both of his art and stature,—a city, second only to the metropolis in histrionic science, and pre-eminently distinguished as a school of actors*—it may be expected that we should bear some testimony to the public opinion of Elliston in a few of those leading parts of tragedy to which by this time he had put forth such high pretensions.

* Bath produced Siddons, Henderson, Edwin, and others.

ELLISTON was an actor of what may be termed the Romantic School. Unlike in style, either of his great contemporaries, Kemble or Cooke, he was yet distinguished in some of those delineations of tragedy, by which the names of those two actors have become so justly memorable; and whatever deficiency attached to him in respect of their appropriate excellences, was in a great measure supplied by that demonstration of the picturesque which, when germane to the character, never fails to impress the spectator with delight.

Of the commanding presence—the passionless stoicism—which characterized so much the style of Mr. Kemble, and of that classic bearing which, on the Roman scene, rendered him incomparably greater than any English actor history may have handed to us since the days of Betterton, Elliston had no perception. The metaphysical ponderings of *Brutus*, the inspelled imaginings of *Macbeth*,* were read in the very form and aspect of Kemble; but the fire of *Hotspur* and chivalry of *Henry V.*, bright as they

* The following is an abstract of the account, which Tom Davies gives in his "Miscellanies," of various actors in this part. Betterton is celebrated in the "Tatler" as being excellent in *Macbeth*, but Cibber makes no particular mention of him in that character, which he acted on the very verge of life. Mills afterwards obtained it of Wilks, but he was heavy and dull; Quin was monotonous; Mossop wanted variety; Barry had too much amenity for the terrible agonies of *Macbeth;* Garrick alone could comprehend and execute the complicated properties of this character.

were in his beautiful portraiture, did not extinguish the burning of his fellow light, which lost none of its brilliancy by a near propinquity to that great master of his art.

Elliston in both of these parts displayed a romantic gallantry of tone and action, foregoing no lien on the dignity of either, which rendered his impersonations equal to any comparison. He was distinguished for flexibility and variableness of voice, which produced powerful effects—now "the silver-toned Barry," and now again the manly intonations of Booth—which always being judiciously employed, tended greatly to that amount of fame which attached to him as a tragic actor.*

The mental abstraction which belongs to the character of *Hamlet*, not calm and stoical, but tost and turbulent, met with a happy delineation in Elliston's efforts—his tremulous awe, his impressive accents, when in the presence of his father's spirit, produced on his auditory a cleaving sympathy—like Betterton, "he made the ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself."

Mr. Kemble was here too much the "Prince of Denmark,"—his awe too much at *court*, as though he might have uttered, "Angels and *ministers of*

* "The learned Selden," speaking of tone, pointedly asks, "If a man were to cry out Murder! in the accents of making love, would any one run to help him?"

state, defend us!"—not so, the subject of our present inquiry: the animal passions were naturally portrayed, while at no sacrifice of essential grace; and though Elliston by no means retained for any length of time, this ability in the part in question, yet in its brief possession he was popularly considered to have had no superior. In the chastening interview with the players, Mr. Kemble's style of instruction and manner, rose far above the attempts of his young rival; and in the closet scene, Mr. Kemble was equally his master. At one moment Elliston seemed almost affected to tears—he appeared to take too literally "si vis me flere, dolendum est, primum ipsi tibi"—the effect was bad, and altogether inconsistent with the tenor of the scene.

The expression of grief on the stage should ever be manly—a sob, however natural, is more likely to produce a smile than any sympathetic emotion.

Notwithstanding Elliston's popularity in this part, we incline to think *Hamlet* was not amongst his most felicitous tragic attempts. The character of *Hamlet* is not that of tenderness; had the "royal Dane" been living, and *Claudius* guiltless of his blood, it remains still a question whether the young prince had proved himself really a *lover*. When he finds himself even at Ophelia's grave, he merely utters, "What! the fair Ophelia!" and although

he avows that "forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum," yet the speech is evidently a splenetic outpouring against *Laertes*, rather than the bursting of a lover's bosom.

Elliston's ambition was to shew himself an original actor, which in most instances he did, to the credit of his judgment and increased dramatic effect; yet in the part of the *Stranger*, he had evidently taken Mr. Kemble as his archetype; and certainly he could not have selected a better; for next to *Penruddock*, which in Mr. Kemble's delineation was positively without a fault, his *Stranger* was a most striking portraiture.

Mr. Kemble's manner of comment on the conduct of *Mrs. Haller*, which he apprehends to have been a scheme to practise on his feelings—his deportment, on recognising her—his description of the sneers that would track him, should they again appear together—his mode of tearing the paper, and his speech, "I have heard much good of you," &c., gave at least strong indications of our comedian having *seen* Kemble in this part—but Elliston's listening to the song, wherein Mr. Kemble only appeared dejected, gave the spectator a closer impression of past happiness suddenly recalled to memory, and the speechless anguish of a broken heart.*

* Quintilian mentions having seen actors, after performing pathetic characters, actually weep for a time, on laying aside

Elliston made also a considerable "hit" at Bath, in the part of *Rolla*, by taking up, in a great measure, a different view of impersonation, from that adopted by Mr. Kemble in the same. Nothing could be more popular, at this period, than Mr. Kemble's delineation of the character; and Elliston truly felt "onerosum est succedere bono principi;" but hazardous as it was, he succeeded to his best ambition. He felt that Kemble's *Rolla* was rather *Coriolanus in a Peruvian garb* than the native impulse of a pure unlettered patriot—stilted but not awful —the dignity of a king rather than a man. Elliston conceived the words, "What Peruvian ever wronged a Spaniard?" not as an harangue, but a bold and resolute appeal; and in the previous intelligence to *Cora*, "Alonzo is taken prisoner," he exhibited a touch of human sensibility which, whilst it gave new lustre to the heroic scenes, snatched an effect at the moment, which Kemble disdained to elicit. His rescue of *Alonzo's* child, also, having a more evident show of impulse in action, was perhaps more striking than Mr. Kemble's manner; but the latter, in the very concluding scene, always accomplished a great triumph.

The mixed character of *Orestes* was one of Elliston's most successful delineations. His depressed

their masks. "Vidi ego sæpe histriones atque comœdos, cum ex aliquo graviore actu personam deposuissent, flentes adhuc egredi."

state of mind at disappointed passion, in the commencement of the play—his speech in the presence of *Hermione*, flattered that she had sent for him—

> "Ah! madam, is it true? Does, then, Orestes,
> At length attend you by your own commands?"

were all finely impressive.

The manner in which he related the death of *Pyrrhus*, and that wilderness of idea which precedes confirmed madness, exhibited a masterpiece of the Romantic School.

In *Romeo*, Elliston was always attractive—a success multiplying his triumphs without greatly adding to his fame; as *Romeo* is perhaps the least intellectual character of Shakspeare's heroes. But the wild, romantic passion of the youthful Veronese, and that frightful despair, the last of mortal suffering, were powerfully portrayed by him—the scene with *Friar Lawrence*, wherein he hears his sentence, " banishment," and particularly the speech, concluding—

> ———" They may seize
> On the white wonder of dear Juliet's hand,
> And steal immortal blessings from her lips,"

were also most effectively sustained.

We do not find any great praise given to his impersonation of *Othello*, although he frequently acted the part. If, therefore, we are to conclude that the attempt was not what might be deemed success-

ful, it is but fair to his attainments in other directions, to credit that there were at least some features in it of considerable merit.

Elliston, at this period, clearly *delighted* in his art, and took unwearied pains in the study of all his characters, not merely in the theatre itself, but he left no opportunity neglected of marking the human character, under the varied chances of life, by which it might be strongly acted upon.

He recollected, as the reader himself will probably call to mind, that affecting incident in the life of Garrick, whose friend, an elderly man, having an only daughter, was one day caressing the child at an open window, from which it suddenly sprang, and falling into the street, was killed on the spot; the mind of the father at once deserted him. Garrick frequently visited the poor destraught, and took from him many impressions which afterwards so strikingly characterized his representation of *Lear*.*

Galt has said, in his "Lives of the Players," that Cooke, from a severity of style, might be deemed the "Tacitus of the English Stage." Taking up the above hint, we may not inaptly, perhaps, designate Elliston as the "Livy" of the same period. The picturesque and romantic air, which he often

* A still more remarkable anecdote is transmitted to us of an ancient actor, who, in the play of the "Electra," brought on the stage the urn containing the ashes of his own son, as a new excitement to his scenic efforts.

threw into his impersonations, if open sometimes to suspicion on the rigid grounds of good faith, was generally in perfect keeping and always greatly interesting; whilst his love of "*making* speeches" rendered the comparison with that oratorical historian still more happy.

Though far short of a *great tragedian*, Elliston was an impressive player of tragic parts. If not *Cato*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, or *Melantius*, he was *Juba*, *Edgar*, *Macduff*, and *Amintor*, without a superior. In the character of *Amintor*, full of those inconsistencies and weaknesses, which, as in that of *Jaffier*, not unfrequently give a peculiar interest to the scene, Elliston won the praise of his auditors; and the manner and force in which he delivered one speech, was always a point of admiration. He addresses *Evadne* on her remorse:—

> "—— Do not mock me,
> Though I am tame, and bred up with my wrongs,
> Which are my foster-brothers, I may leap,
> Like a hand-wolf, into my native wildness,
> And do an outrage. Prithee, do not work me!"

His *Falconbridge* was good; but Mr. Charles Kemble has so far excelled all actors we have on record, in this particular delineation, that we venture not a momentary hazard with him.

Phocion, *Douglas*, and *Horatio*, were amongst Elliston's less ambitious, but at the same time,

highly successful efforts; for he manifested equal pains and diligence in study, however unequally esteemed some of these parts are, in the acceptation of the drama; and seemed to feel the truth of that excellent exhortation which concludes a number of the "Observer"—namely,

"An actor is in the capacity of a steward to every living muse, and of an executor to every departed one. The *poet* digs up the ore; he sifts it from its dross, refines and purifies it for the mint; but the *actor* sets the stamp upon it, and makes it current in the world."

We have so far spoken of Elliston only as a tragedian — his comedy, by which he afterwards became more generally known, and in which he far more unequivocally excelled, will become the inquiry of future pages.

Baffled in his many attempts at becoming part proprietor in the Bath property, Elliston had now, however, attained a joint management in a London establishment — namely, that of the Haymarket Theatre—and in March, he took leave of his old friends by a benefit, which was rendered not a little remarkable by a speech from the *beneficiare* and a "row" in the playhouse.

The manner in which Elliston, in after days, distinguished himself by these episodical addresses to the audience, of which he was clearly so vain, that he would frequently administer them without a

cause (as practitioners sometimes recommend their drugs to prevent sickness,) induces us to take more notice of this particular instance than, perhaps, we should otherwise have done; for he verily became, in course of time, a kind of dramatic *Anacharsis Clootz*, vindicating his own rights, one moment, in a Court of Chancery, and at another, instructing his play-going auditory in the formation of their judgment, and telling them plainly what was wholesome for their constitution, as critics and men of taste.

His address on this occasion was woven in many party-coloured threads, which gave to his harangue a most pleasing variety;—of course, he had much to say about "gratitude" and "early friends"—then came the "*French Revolution*" and his "*own prospects*"—while "*Shakspeare and the musical glasses*" completed the tissue.

It had been publicly announced, that on the occasion of this benefit, "the pit would be thrown into boxes," and "the gallery admission raised to pit prices;" an expedient not without precedent, but a usage highly indecorous, and which, in more recent times, has been very properly discontinued.

Favoured and caressed as Elliston had ever been by the Bath public, this experiment did not pass without much invective, and some opposition; for no sooner did the curtain rise for the play, than there was a rising also amongst the spectators, which threatened, for a time, serious consequences.

"Throwing the pit into boxes," had very nearly produced throwing the boxes into the pit; for some of the most irritated of the party were actually about demolishing the furniture, and the extra tax which had been extorted by the gallery Commissioners, seemed to indicate as awful a result as the impost of "ship-money" itself, or any similar act of tyrannic "benevolence." Elliston, however, "made a speech"—which many might have envied, and none but George Robins, excelled—by which he presently won all hearts to his own service, and peace was restored without one sixpence returned.

The play was the "Beaux Stratagem,"* Elliston, of course, sustaining *Archer*, which he did with great vivacity and effect.

Amongst his early dramatic friends, whom he now quitted to meet no more—at least, on the mimic scene—was Quick, the original *Bob Acres* and *Tony Lumpkin*, of whom says "Anthony Pasquin"—

> "With his gibes and his quiddities, cranks and his wiles,
> His croak and his halt, and his smirks and his smiles,
> View the smart tiny Quick, giving grace to a joke,
> With a laugh-loving eye, or a leer equivoque!"

Before leaving Bath, Elliston received fresh intelligence from Colman.

* "This celebrated comedy was begun, finished, and acted, in the space of six weeks; but too late, with all that haste, for the advantage of the author. On the third night, which was for his benefit, Farquhar died of a broken heart."—*Galt's Lives.*

"I have engaged," says he, "a Mr. Kelly, and my covenants are by no means so agreeable as I could have wished. As those whom heaven has joined, no man is to put asunder, I am compelled to take him—wife and baggage.

"The lady's tongue is of that fathom, that on opening her mouth on my stage, it will unavoidably reach the visages of the upper gallery. It bears with it, likewise, a lazy lisp, which could not fail teaching our audience the 'Whole Art of' hissing, did they require to be reminded of such accomplishments. Plain she is, at all times; but in speaking, she chews the cud, and is rather fitted for a museum than a playhouse.

"It is Plutarch, I believe, who tells us that *Minerva* threw away her flute on perceiving the grimaces she made in the surface of a river. She was a sensible woman; I would to Heaven, Mrs. Kelly would throw me over too.

"I have also engaged a Mr. Hatton—a three-pounder, and a very useful man; for he can cram a hundred lengths into his head with the facility of a land-surveyor's reel-measure.

"I hope to greet you in town on the 24th. Come to Waldron's at two o'clock, and I will read to you the Prelude; I will then give you some clew to my *castellum*, where George Colman is to be found by his *friends*—'a place,' as Mrs. Millwood declares, 'by art so cunningly contrived, that the piercing

eyes of jealousy may search in vain, to find an entrance.'

" Weighty Lady Buckinghamshire* has just written to me for a stage-box, on our opening—for *her*, unquestionably *an opening*. And now, success attend us!

" Haymarket against Newmarket!"

Early in May, Elliston started for London, but the journey itself was a little interrupted by the coach breaking down within two miles of Devizes. Unfortunately it rained hard at the moment—a pelting torrent—so that the inside passengers being prevented walking onwards, the coach was propped up, and the good people compelled to remain stationary, whilst the guard rode on with a pair of horses, for the purpose of bringing back some vehicle for conveying the party into the town.

This incident, which, at any other time, had afforded our friend a step only to further adventure, was now a great annoyance, as he had appointed to meet Colman, at a certain hour, in London. However, he made the best of it, converting his own mortification into a source of amusement for others

* Lady Buckinghamshire, when Mrs. Hobart, was celebrated in the Duke of Richmond's private theatricals. She played the *Widow Belmore*, in "The Way to Keep Him," and Mrs. Damer sustained the part of *Mrs. Lovemore*. These ladies often appeared together with great éclat. Lady B.'s *Mrs. Oakley* was thought even to resemble that of Mrs. Pritchard.

—particularly with one old lady, who declared "it was as good as a play to hear him." He talked, as usual, of Ben Jonson and Moses, Julius Cæsar and Lord George Gordon—so that, however gloomy the prospect might have been without, all was cheerful and sunny within.

After waiting in this situation for above an hour, the fresh carriage arrived, which proved to be no other than a black, mourning-coach, followed by a hearse, intended as a conveyance for the luggage. Here new difficulties arose, some of the party refusing to enter so mortally grave a vehicle—difficulties, which were but little removed by the many nervous stories Elliston had to tell about Colonel Despard, who had just been hanged, and poor Colonel Montgomery, who had just been murdered. But at length, in they crept, and we verily believe many a funeral party had been far more light-hearted, than some of the present company—particularly a certain quack doctor, who had now completely lost his courage, and whose physiognomy underwent as sudden a change, as that of some of our merry friends after being about fifteen minutes at sea!

A mourning coach conveying passengers, habited in all the colours of a harlequin jacket, with harlequin himself in the midst; and a hearse following, containing, amongst other things, the wardrobe of a travelling comedian, with the nostrums of "Dr. Infallible," to boot—must have been a strange sight to the "upturned, wondering eyes," of the

townspeople of Devizes. The cavalcade, however, without further impediment, reached the inn, when it was ascertained that, at least two hours must elapse before a proper vehicle could be got in readiness, for the travellers to proceed.

Part of the meantime Elliston occupied by perambulating the town, and entering a stationer's shop for the purchase of some article, his attention was irresistibly arrested by the fair *boutiquière* who attended him. She was habited in half-mourning, and followed from the back-parlour to the counter, by a little prattling infant, evidently her own darling. Her manner was reserved, having that air of depression, the result rather of affliction than the indication of natural disposition.

Elliston regarded her with the curiosity of half-awakened recollection, and protracting his stay under some trifling pretence, endeavoured to solve his perplexity. The truth presently flashed on him, and he exclaimed,

"Alice! Alice!—is it indeed you! Do you not remember me?"

A slight, instantaneous suffusion passed over her, as he uttered these words, and raising her eyes, which spoke too evidently of sorrow, replied, with a faint, nervous smile—"Oh, yes! you are——"

"Is it really my young, kind friend, *Alice*, whom I see?" interrupted Elliston—"who was so good to me at Newbury, eleven years ago, when, melancholy myself, I——"

Here, the tears of poor Alice began to flow so copiously, that Elliston knew not, for a moment, whether to proceed; but seeing clearly he had broached some spring of bitterness, he at once frankly sought the history of her distress, and all that had passed since their first meeting.

The following may be considered, in substance, the narrative collected by the disjointed account she now gave him:—

Alice, for a fleeting season, a happy wife, was now, at twenty-seven years, a broken-hearted widow! She had married, about six years since, a lieutenant in the navy—"the noblest and the kindest of men, and so handsome that he was quite a prodigy!"—for such were her own words. Their means were but slender, but they enjoyed that felicity, which gives to days the rapidity of moments, and to moments the value of ages.

Their first blow was the death of her own father; a calamity not lessened by the discovery that he had left his family in poor circumstances, which Alice lamented, far more on her mother's account than her own, for blessed with the wealth of her husband's love, she could not believe that want could assume any other shape in this world, than wanting that.

The expedition against Copenhagen, not long after, called the young sailor suddenly to his "first love"—namely, his country—of whom, though Alice had often nobly expressed, she should never

feel one jealous pang, yet, when the moment of divorcement actually had arrived, her conduct was so totally unlike that Spartan magnanimity, which her school-days had taught her to admire, that we fear she would sadly discredit such glowing tradition, were we to represent the pitiful object of despair she exhibited at his farewell.

Having joined the naval armament in the Yarmouth Roads, under Sir Hyde Parker, the lieutenant felt no longer "a divided duty." "Love, honour, and obey," was now his country's; and he was quickly called on to prove his allegiance, in the memorable day of the Danish siege.

The result is well recorded. "We fought and conquered!"—The glorious upshot was the immediate theme of the young sailor's communication to the sleepless solitude of her, who was at that moment praying for his safety. "Victory!" was the only word he announced—for victory was perhaps the only sentiment the mind had, just then, room for.

A second letter, not long after the former, reached her. Its tone was less of havoc, much more of affection; indeed, during the whole two pages, there was not a single man-of-war in commission. The lieutenant, in fact, spoke ardently of return, and anticipated in colours, more glowing than those of England's flag, the ecstacy of meeting.

The day mentioned in the letter had arrived. Alice, attired in the very dress her husband had chosen for her as his parting present, and with a countenance beaming in more than hope—confidence—at soon beholding him, caressed her infant by a thousand kisses, on the sweetest holiday she had ever known.

The hour arrived—had passed—but he—he came not. The coach, mentioned as his conveyance, had already rolled through Maidstone, (the town near which she then resided,) yet brought not her husband.

" He is detained," cried she ; " to-morrow I shall see him—to-morrow, which shall gild my days to come, by its blessed remembrance." Spite of all, Alice was that night depressed, but, like the nure-tree of Deccan, her heart exulted in its new existence on the morrow. She rehearsed again his favourite song, that she might be the more perfect in its performance, (as she said,) but it was, in fact, to divert her musings.

Again, the coach—again, on this second day—threaded the town—yet no form of him, whose spirit was the locked-up hostage in her heart. She would not be alarmed—she was actually *frightened* at alarm—framing in her hurried fancy new excuses for his stay, the probability of which, she would not trust herself to examine.

" Oh, no ! I am not alarmed," cried she, directing

her unsteady gaze towards her infant; "I will just try that song once more;" and try it indeed she did, for at the second note she uttered, a torrent of tears burst on the attempt, which defied all power or artifice to control. Abruptly—almost involuntarily—she rose up, and approaching the window beheld a gentleman, a friend of her husband, resident at Maidstone, already at her gate. She flew to receive him.

"He has written to you?" cried Alice, inquiringly. "You have intelligence of him? Why is he not with you?" Her visitor's manner, rather than his silence, plainly indicated evil. "Tell me," she almost shrieked—"Tell me why I do not see my husband?"

The event may be recorded in a few words. The visitor in question, had humanely undertaken this mission, for the purpose of breaking an intelligence to her, which the public journals had already announced. The lieutenant, it appears, had quitted his ship, and had gone on board a cutter on some pressing duty. One of those hurricanes, so frequently fatal on the eastern coast of England, drove the vessel ashore, and before assistance could be procured, the greater part of the crew were lost, amongst them the husband of poor Alice. The state of anguish into which she was thrown by this announcement may possibly be conceived,—mental stupor, which, after a certain time, was

awakened to the agonizing sense of sudden widowhood.

"Woes cluster—rare are solitary woes."

The marriage of Alice having been, from the first, a distempered subject to her husband's relatives, her present distresses found but little favour with the lieutenant's two sisters. They now induced their mother to treat Alice with such positive inhumanity, that in a short time, she was given to understand, as she had chosen to force herself into their family, they did not feel themselves called on to extend her any assistance; and as their feelings had already been so deeply wounded by the death of their brother, they were totally incapable of entering into other people's distresses.

Collecting, therefore, her effects, Alice removed, with her child, under her own mother's roof, on the borders of Somersetshire. Having been informed of an opportunity for investing her crumbs of fortune, in the town of Devizes, to "unprecedented advantage," and being desirous of relieving her mother from the additional burden of herself and child, she hastily closed with the offer presented to her, and purchasing the stock and good will of her present shop, at the round sum the outgoing tenant had fixed on it, "to save," as he pleasantly said, "unnecessary trouble to either party," she entered on the estate of her promised Golconda; and, like the milk-maid in the fable, began to cal-

culate her gains, in a provision for almost the only thing she had now left to love on earth—namely, her infant.

It turned out, however, poor Alice had been wofully taken in. She had paid, at least, twice as much for the stock as it was worth; and as to the "good will," it appeared that the business had been parted with by the late pleasant retailer, owing to a London trader being about to open a shop on a considerable scale, at Devizes, in precisely the same line of business; which, at the time of Elliston's visit, had actually taken place, having secured pretty nearly the whole custom of the town and its vicinity.

Such were the events under which Elliston's recognition of the benevolent Alice took place—an occurrence, by no means calculated to render his journey so light-hearted an undertaking as it had promised to be, in the commencement.

An instance of *accidental recognition* occurred in North Britain in the year 1793, which was extremely curious, and under far happier circumstances than the one appertaining to our immediate history. Mrs. Cross, of Covent Garden Theatre, was, in this year, acting in Glasgow, and on one occasion the Provost being present, the lady had no sooner made her appearance on the stage, than the agitated functionary exclaimed—

"Stop—stop the play! I would speak with that

woman!" Great was the consternation throughout the auditory at this highly dramatic *emeute*, and the curtain being immediately lowered, the perturbed Provost made his way, at once, into the actress's dressing-room. After a few hurried words, he discovered her to be his own wife, from whom he had been separated for nearly twenty years. Each had supposed the other dead!—a *coup de théâtre*, which would have turned the brain of Congreve himself. The magistrate, hereupon, bore off the lady, arm in arm, to his own house, and the next evening she took her place in front of the theatre, amongst the patronesses of art, where she was quite as much a heroine as when sustaining the woes of *Calista* herself.

The reunion between Colman and Elliston having taken place, in London, over the stipulated rump-steak, dressed as the reader may possibly remember, at the comedian's suggestion; the "Little Theatre" in the Haymarket commenced its season, on the 15th of May, with—"No Prelude," a dialogue written by the author-manager, and spoken by Elliston and Waldron, the prompter. This production, full of "pith and puissance," was extremely well received.

But notwithstanding the promises, and—it is only fair to say—the exertions of Colman, his company was not a good one. With the exception of Mathews, it was meagre and inefficient; and even Mathews

himself did but little to keep the ship off a lee shore.

The season, on the termination, was but a disastrous voyage; nor could Colman, the "Prospero," with his "so potent art," restore the vessel "tight and yare."

Their Majesties, however, most graciously continued their patronage to our subject, commanding a play at the very onset of the season, in which Elliston took the lead.

Richard the Third he now acted for the first time in London, and frequently repeated the character, in which he appeared to give much satisfaction; but we apprehend it was, at best, but an unequal performance. The early scenes were sustained with much adroitness and versatility, but on the whole, Elliston was here so incomparably inferior to his great cotemporary, Cooke, that we suspect he was in no slight degree indebted to the public favour, in which he stood generally, for some part of the approbation he enjoyed in this especial undertaking.

Colman, under the designation of "Arthur Griffinhoff," produced a new piece, entitled "Love Laughs at Locksmiths," in which Elliston impersonated *Captain Beldaire*—a trifling part, but which he rendered an amusing feature, by his spirited acting and very clever execution of a simple ballad. He also spoke a "Patriotic Address," another *fantaisie* of Colman's muse, written by way of epilogue

to a play of Boaden, called "The Maid of Bristol," which became, in fact, so popular as to render the "Maid" in question, who was but an ordinary, ill-favoured piece of goods, almost "a toast," and sustaining a dull drama, as Drelincourt and "Death!" were borne on the shoulders of *Mrs. Veal!*

The above suggests a little incident related in some of the recollections of Miss Rafter, afterwards the celebrated Mrs. Clive.

On the first night of "Love in a Riddle," a pastoral by the Laureat, in which Miss R. played the part of *Phillida*, some persons had met in the theatre for the sake of crushing the piece, and they, in fine, succeeded; but when *Phillida* first appeared on the scene, one of the rioters was heard to say—

"Zounds! Tom, take care, or this charming little devil will save all." Colman's "little devil" was yet more potent.

The "*Castellum*" to which Colman alluded in his last letter, and to which his pecuniary embarrassments had, for a time, driven him, was at Sudbury, near Harrow. Here, under another name, *latet-tavit*—whilst all communications, relative to the theatre, were conveyed to him through a trusty messenger, who made his daily journey for that purpose.

Colman having felt annoyance at some proceeding of his stage-manager, wrote to him accordingly,

expressing himself on the matter, without reserve. Elliston, nettled at these reproaches, makes an immediate reply, vindicating his conduct on the point in question; and in conclusion, observes—

"I must therefore tell you, your lease of me is held by a small fine: the omission of your peppercorn rent disburdens you, and you will do right to release yourself. I prefer this alternative to subjecting myself a second time, to the very unpleasant feelings your expressions have given me."

To this Colman rejoins by the following:—

"Dear Elliston,—Every man has his *amour propre*, and I certainly did not intend to alarm yours, by the loose hints which I transmitted to you. Have you installed yourself Theatrical Pontiff, and assumed Infallibility? Is it impertinent in the principal to give his opinion to the agent? If so, woe to every man who appoints a deputy! Is it customary for an agent to think himself insulted whenever he receives instructions? If so, woe to every man who acknowledges a principal!

"As a proof that you can commit a blunder, even while you deem yourself most adroit, I would mention that you have this morning, taken the trouble to come from London to communicate my patronymic in your own hand-writing, to a cunning varlet, under the guise of a chaw-bacon, at my gate, from whom I had most cautiously concealed it.

"Tell me if my frankness has really given you a

wound, and ceremony shall, at once, be applied as a balsam. I will round my periods, cull my phrases, and sift my words before I offer them to your acute perception of offence. I will remember that you are—

> ' ———Tremblingly alive
> To each fine impulse——,'

and shall be tender accordingly.

"As to my pepper-corn rent, (pepper and your thin skin make one positively writhe,) I shall pay it and retain my tenure. Let boys and girls who have just tied the noose, quarrel for pastime, or talk of parting—'tis a petulant idleness. Men of sense and business would laugh, and cry 'Shame on us!'

"P.S. When you write, give your letter to Mrs. G., that she may bring it down to me on her next jaunt."

Thus was the grievance healed; another rump-steak was the result, nor was the Madeira a "casus omissus," our readers may be well assured.

On the 4th of April, the London Gazette had announced the dissolution of partnership between Elliston, his wife, and Miss Flemming, by common consent. Mrs. Elliston, thereupon, opened a Dancing Academy on her own account, under the same patronage as that by which she had been always distinguished; so that her schemes taking up the very genius of her appropriate art, vaulted,

with one elastic spring, on the pinnacle of success. Miss Flemming, who found it was now no longer possible to back out from her anteriority of years, gave up, not only the fantastic toe, but other fantastic imaginings, ill becoming a lady of full two-score; and cultivated the more reasonable hope of interesting some Bath valetudinarian, who might be inclined to commute the airy qualities of a *belle épouse*, for the more nutritive attributes of a steady wife.

In the autumn of this year, Mrs. Elliston underwent a severe shock, by an accident which befel William, her eldest son. The boy had quitted the nursery, on the upper floor of the house, and getting astride the stair hand-rail on the same landing, was precipitated from the top to the bottom. The child was picked up in a senseless state, from which he was happily soon restored, having "'scaped by miracle," with only a few bruises.

The agitation into which Mrs. Elliston was thrown by this circumstance, prevented her fulfilling the duties of her academy for some days; and Elliston being at Bath at the time, the following scene took place, which possibly may be found not unamusing.

On one of these mornings of Mrs. Elliston's *relache*, three ladies, who had not been apprised of the above event, arrived as usual in Milsom Street, to take their lessons. As they had come from some considerable distance, Elliston resolved they

should not depart disappointed, and at the suggestion of the moment, declared "*he* would give the lesson himself." Elliston, as it is well known, was really a very graceful dancer, so that he professed no more than he was able to execute, and was convicted, therefore of far less audacity than *Leander* in the "Mock Doctor," who understood a cataplasm about as well as he did Hebrew.

The humour of the adventure pleased the comedian, whilst an hour's pirouetting with three sparkling young creatures (as he thought) would by no means be unacceptable to his constitution. It may be well conceived that, it was at the expense of a few blushes on the cheeks of the said damsels, that he first presented himself, announcing the circumstances under which he had undertaken the part at so short a notice; but with happy address, putting his pupils into self-possession, he stood before them, a kind of compound of the elasticity of Deshayes, and the sublimity of "*Merlin!*"

In respect of the "more advanced" of these damsels—a lady from Tipperary—it was clearly desirable that the morning's lesson should be, at least, begun, as her dancing days were nearly over. Besides, punctuality with her, was a kind of religious observance, so much so, that she was not that fickle creature to be changing her age every twelve months, but stuck to the fact, seeing, like a

sound logician, that what was true at one time must consequently be true at all. And as to personal attractions, like those good people who, if they cannot command success, will at least deserve it, so with the same ardour did she cultivate the Graces; and, had they been as numerous as their cousins, the daughters of Mnemosyne, she was tall enough to deserve the favour of the whole family.

In pursuance of this, she had already exhausted poor Miss Flemming, having nearly worn herself to a thread, and was now attended to Milsom-street by her black footman, with the determination of doing no less for poor Mrs. Elliston.

But a short interval, and all was in operation—the little *emigré* was already seated at the harpsichord, and Elliston had led out his *belle aspirante* to the movement of a cotillon. "Avancez—balancez—chassez," &c., ten times repeated. "Encore—une fois—à votre place—à merveille!"—again, ten times. The second lady having no longer the fear of mamma before her eyes, was enamoured of her new instructor; whilst the youngest had from the very first, burst into an immoderate giggle—an indulgence, she had clearly made up her mind on prosecuting for the remainder of the morning. She commenced, at once, her last steps with an activity equally unbounded, appearing to be under no less an influence, than the combined attack of laughing gas, and the malady of St. Vitus.

A quick minuet succeeded. All was "hail fellow!"—Dancing mad!—the little *emigré* played like a spinning-jenny, and chattered like a water-mill—all was in a whirl, like March dust. "Miss Florence" became as fiery as a red Indian, and the little school-girl protested she "could keep it up for a week."

How great a portion of this they would really have occupied, is uncertain, for time had been as nimble-footed as the rest of the party, when a servant entering the apartment, suggested some slight refreshment, with a broad hint that dinner-hour was just at hand. At length, all was still—the movements, like the works of a musical-box, brought suddenly to a stand—and the curtain fell on the Milsom-street Ballet to the entire satisfaction of all present.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Young—Elliston's objection to that gentleman's engagement—Correspondence—Colman and Elliston—Manœuvre to arrest Colman—A green parrot—Dramatist—Extraordinary benefit at the Opera House—Fracas—Pewter pots—Bailiffs outwitted—Aaron Graham, the magistrate—Elliston at Drury Lane—*Rolla*—On board the Royal yacht—Elliston and Miss De Camp act before their Majesties—Elliston acts the *Duke Aranza* in the "Honeymoon"—Great success—Mr. Gore's letter—The Young Roscius—A critical letter from Lord Harcourt.

In December, 1803, Mathews made earnest application to Colman, on the part of Mr. Charles Young, for that gentleman's engagement at the Haymarket, from the ensuing season; a question on which the proprietor felt it expedient to consult Elliston.

"After your long silence," says Colman, "never again prefer a charge of idleness against me—it will be but a Pot and Kettle recrimination, and only discover the coaly complexion of each of us. Mr.

Young has been mentioned to me, as an actor of high merit—even by yourself. In respect of a clash with you, he is willing to engage while you are acting-manager, and in possession of the first business. You perceive, by even so much, I wish him to be of our Hundred.

" Our establishment last year was one of promise only, not of performance, spite *all* our ' performances.' Young, by this arrangement, would help, rather than mar you, for your fence will be better shewn, by having a man who would not parry so clumsily with you, as many in our *Salle d'Armes.* But if the subject be absolutely repulsive to you, I shall drop it. In the mean, I will announce to Mathews, that I cannot definitively reply to him for some days. Restore me his letter, which I now enclose to you.

" I write from my cabin, but always direct to me at Jewell's. Adieu! G. C.

" I sincerely congratulate Mrs. E. and yourself on the recovery of your little boy. Doubtless, you cautioned him never again to put trust in a banister. But I forget—you have made up your differences, and there is no more railing between you."

" We *must* clash," observes Elliston, in reply. " Mr. Young's claims are of that order, that he ought not to hold a second rank, which he must do, should he engage with you, whilst I am at the Haymarket—and I cannot afford to sacrifice any

position to which the public favour has advanced me."

A few weeks previous to the opening of the theatre, the part of *Rigid*, in a new comedy, entitled "Guilty or not Guilty," written by Mr. T. Dibdin, was forwarded to Elliston, at Bath, for study.

Here was a new grievance! more hot water—the "kettle" singing again, yet but a poor prospect of the "pot" boiling for Colman. Elliston fancied he should have been first consulted on the play itself, before the transmission of any part to him, and expressed himself grandiloquently thereon, in a letter lengthy as a Statistical Report, to which Colman rejoins:—

"You have amply made up for your silence, my dear Elliston, for you shoot your '*plaustra verborum*' on my poor shoulders, almost to crush me. Your ink, like the water of Nile in summer, is out upon me, literally 'with a vengeance.' The extraordinary dimensions of your chandler's-shop paper have tickled my fancy, as much as your filling them has excited my wonderment.

"Could I forbear casting this play, with the devil, in the person of its author, at my elbow? You have not only the best part in the piece, but the part in itself is good—and as to the rest, like my bread, it is a cast on the waters of my current company, and must sink or swim.

"I have engaged Miss Tyrer* and Miss Howell,

* Now, Mrs. Liston.

whom I name in the order (I think) of their merits. They will be especially useful in our vocal business. Tyrer will become more than useful. All Kelly's *sticks* may cross that river, which runs by a similar sound. Mrs. Cleland is again of our company—do not blame me, for I am not adamant against the combined entreaties of man and woman; for Mrs. *Tommy* Cleland is either at pleasure.

"There is not a more notoriously idle fellow than the one whom I am spurring on to write—the 'scape-grace is myself. He cannot do better than 'borrow a little of your' ink and whitybrown, for a start. 'To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow' I shall capitate the first page of a parchment book, 'Act One!' The effort is like a contemplated plunge in the sea—the more you look at it, the less you like it—I shiver in my slippers—let me fortify myself with a little gin and water ('drinks') . . . . there! I have tasted the poisoned chalice . . . . again . . . . with best regards to you.

"As the present are really my Night Thoughts, I may fairly again mention *Young*. I must confess I deem you in error on this point, though yield it, I do, at your request—our object ought to be 'Rich Compounds.'

"How came you to sprain your ancle? Ah! Harry Dornton! 'Late hours! night air! bad women!' You are never so respectable as in my company. When you come to town—or rather to

the west end of it, you will be joyfully received by your friend and compurgator.

"Miss Woodfall (daughter of my deceased friend) will be of our Hundred. De Camp, I am still to settle with; but he also will certainly be with us. I am sleepy—very. God bless you!

"G. C. (read) Gin's Cold."

When Colman was first arrested, it was at the suit of his *friend;* an event by no means remarkable on *that* account, as the world has frequently shewn us; but the circumstance which led to his immediate capture, was highly characteristic of the dramatist himself.

Colman, who had for some time past, been chary of his visits abroad, had placed himself, on a certain fine morning, snugly within a hackney-coach, for the purpose of calling on his legal adviser, near Bedford Square. He reached the house about midday; and desiring the driver to remain with his vehicle at the door, until he had transacted his business, proceeded at once up stairs.

His purpose being in due time fully discussed, Colman was about departing, but his solicitor, who, in point of fact, was the best friend he ever had, having as great an affection for the *dramatist* as the *client*, detained him as his guest for the day—Colman remained, therefore, for dinner; and at midnight, the supper-table found him still unwilling to depart.

It so happened that Mr. A——, Colman's friendly creditor, as we have named, had been accidentally passing the street on that very morning, soon after Colman had been set down, and had noticed the coach in question at the door of the lawyer; and on passing the same spot about the chimes of midnight, observed the identical vehicle on the identical spot—for Colman had altogether forgotten he had even arrived in a coach at all; obedient to whose orders, the driver had remained nearly twelve hours at the curbstone.

A——, who was a man of quick perceptions, and by no means a stranger to the councils of the manager of the Haymarket, at the house in question, felt at once persuaded he had discovered his man. "This must be Colman!" cried he—"there is but one man in London who would keep a hackney-coach waiting twelve hours, when at twelve paces distant, he might beckon twice the number to his service—*here, must be Colman!*" For "jarvey," this was a good day's work. The hire was of course paid, besides some five shillings fraudulent per centage, which Colman, after supper, was not in a state to dispute.

The man had also in prospect a fat bribe on the next day, for the discovery of the manager's retreat, which he received in due course from the wily Mr. A——, and poor Colman surrendered.

Some months previous to the foregoing event,

Colman had been living at Fulham, immediately contiguous to a cottage then tenanted by Mathews. A—— was at that time in search of him, and Colman being well aware of this, was in the habit of stealthily entering Mathews' house by the back-door, and thus had opportunities of passing many agreeable evenings with his friend.

Mathews, who was as fond of fun, as school-boys of plum pudding, had a remarkably fine parrot, which was quick at picking up words as any actor in the Haymarket company; and in as short a time as might be, the green pet was instructed in the exclamation—"Be off! be off! A——'s coming! A——'s coming!"

On a certain evening, therefore, Colman having raised the latch of Mathews' back door, and being about entering the yard, in which the parrot had been purposely placed, his ears were suddenly startled by the bird's new lesson—"Be off! be off! A——'s coming!—A——'s coming!"—a hint which, it may be well believed, he instantly obeyed.

Puzzled by the possibility of A—— being so near, but at the same time not displeased at the hint, Colman, on the following eve applied himself to the postern-gate, for the purpose of ascertaining the true state of affairs, when the stridulous assault was repeated—"Be off! be off! I say!—A——'s coming!"

Utterly bewildered, and with renewed mortifica-

tion, the affrighted dramatist was once more taking to his heels, when the actor, deeming he had carried the joke quite far enough, popped his head from behind the wall, and in a voice, half parrot and half Mathews, screamed out—"Come back—come back! A——'s in the water-butt!—A——'s in the water-butt!"

The sequel may be well imagined—the friends passed their night merrily together—an event which Mathews fully anticipated, never doubting the thorough good humour of his companion.

The season of 1804 commenced at the time fixed by the licence, with the "Mountaineers;" and on the 26th of May, Dibdin's new comedy was produced.

Elliston was the hero;—his smart, animated acting, contributed greatly to the success of the drama, though it had not sufficient stamina to become "a stock piece." Colman's newly-raised troops, which he styled his "Rural Company," were not highly attractive, and it was therefore deemed expedient to supply a little "town-made goods" in the person of Bannister—"warranted to wear well."

Elliston now performed several new characters, particularly *Vapid* in the "Dramatist," in which he was so eminently successful, that the comedy became at once a favourite, and permanently continued so. *Vapid* was decidedly his best "buffa" part. Elliston again assisted the efforts of "Arthur

Griffenhoff," by undertaking a mediocre character, in as negative a farce, entitled "Gay Deceivers."

His popularity had now so increased, that on the announcement of his benefit, the dimensions of the "Little Theatre" were found unequal to the accommodation of his "troops of friends." Like Bacon, he had grown too large for his dwelling, and calling therefore a council of his advisers, it was determined the Opera House should be secured for the occasion. Taylor, the lessee, gave his permission—Colman acquiesced—and Elliston's benefit was reannounced for the 10th of September, at the King's Theatre, under the immediate sanction of his Majesty.

The performances were "Pizarro," and "Love Laughs at Locksmiths." At an early hour a crowd assembled about the theatre, which, by the time the doors were about opening, had so thickened, that neither constables nor guards could prevent a pressure, which threatened consequences as fatal as those at the "Haymarket," in 1794.*

As the clock was striking five—"concussæ patuere fores!"—the doors were fairly, or rather unfairly, carried off their hinges. To the very letter,

* On the occasion of their Majesties visiting the Haymarket Theatre in the above year, (1794,) the rush into the pit was so great, that many persons were thrown down, and being trampled on by others, fifteen were unfortunately crushed to death, and twenty dreadfully mangled.

it was a "Laugh at *Locksmiths*"—the people poured into the theatre at every aperture, like water into a wreck, and in a few minutes there was an overflow in pit and boxes, which found its level at no less an elevation than the ceiling. The boxes which had been "taken" in the morning, were taken after a different fashion in the afternoon—none of the rightful parties being able to approach their appointed seats.

The house was literally blockaded. But a small portion only could have paid their money, though many had left pledges to the amount, in the shape of hats, shoes, shawls, and skirts of clothing. Some were seen climbing from the pit into fancied refuge of the boxes, whilst not a few were bodily forced again from the parapets into the steaming pit. Action and reaction were equal, after the mathematician's very heart. "Above! below!" was equal discord; for it is not to be supposed the "gods" were idle. No; there was a row amongst the deities, by Jove! The Titans also were at warm work, at the very gates of Olympus—the sons of Cœlus and Terra demanding what they called "a settlement," by a statute of their own framing, whilst those who had already gained it, were in vain applying for "out-door relief." Celestials and infernals—popinjays and paupers—were mingled "pell-mell" in one common confusion. "Chaos was come again!"

Many now scrambled over the orchestra *chevaux-*

de-frise to the stage, at the further outlay of skirts, both woollen and linen; and sundry were the spikes, on which still hung the ignoble trophies of lacerated garments, which were never intended to meet the eye of any but the wearer.

At length, the *chamade* being sounded, and the disturbance somewhat quelled, Elliston stepped forward, as plaintiff in this losing cause; though God knows, his jury was sufficiently packed for any verdict he might desire. As Richard the Second, at Smithfield, (in the words of Hume,) "he advanced towards the multitude, and accosted them with an affable but intrepid countenance;" told them the eyes of all Europe were, at that moment, upon them!—reminded them of the frightful days of the year —80, and blessed his Majesty on the throne! From which culminate state of imagery, he dropped into the "Martinus Scriblerus" vein, concluding by saying that, "convinced as he was, every person honouring him with their presence, meant to pay, he begged leave to observe that, the deficiencies would be received on the following morning at his house, No. 6, Great Russell Street, Covent Garden."

But the "Bathos" was not yet complete. Some of his fast friends being determined to catch all they could, at the spur of the moment, actually procured sundry pewter porter pots, and threading their way through the multitudes in pit and gallery, collected

payments in this manner—silver and copper—pots of half and half—a "lame and impotent conclusion" we may indeed call it, for it was fitted only "to chronicle small beer."

But though unsatisfactory as respected the comedian, it was a strong drink to some of these officious pot companions; for more than one of them (as wicked as *Autolycus* himself) were so tempted by the draught, as to decamp with not only the silver and copper, but the pewter to boot, leaving to Elliston all the odium of so tap-room an experiment, but not that liquidation to which he was entitled.

With great difficulty the play proceeded—"Pizarro," as we have said. Part of the audience occupying those inches on the stage, to which the Peruvian's "brave associates," vainly struggled to advance, *Rolla's* address was actually delivered to an admiring circle of ladies and gentlemen from the vicinity of Knightsbridge, Marylebone, and Bloomsbury Square.

So unconscious were some of the party of their peculiar situation, and so utterly destroyed was, at last, the scenic illusion, that on Mrs. Litchfield (who played *Elvira*) dropping, by accident, her mantle, while rising from the Spaniard's couch, a bystanding young lady, with the promptest kindness in the world, stepped forward, and picking up the spangled vestment, begged, with a gracious curtsy, she might have the pleasure of replacing it;

nor was she at all aware of this grotesque piece of *maladroit*, until brought to her senses, by one of the loudest shouts which had transpired in the theatre, on this memorable night. Elliston realized by this benefit full 600*l.*

A trifling incident occurred, about the closing week at the "Little Theatre," so strikingly *homogène* with our subject, that we cannot forbear the present notice.

A certain comedian who had been playing here during the season, and had made some impression in a part which had fallen to his duty, was haunted by those distressing Blue Devils, yclept bailiffs; and though he had successfully baffled the attack for several nights, yet he was not without pretty strong conviction that, he would be speedily laid up. In fact, the epidemic was very much about just at this period. It was, however, important to all parties that the actor should fulfil his engagements at the theatre.

To elude the bailiffs, therefore, who were constantly besetting the doors, like earth-stoppers, the following expedient was put in motion. The actor's name was changed in the bills, whilst he, dressing his characters rather at variance with his usual manner, and being an admirable mimic, assuming also a strange voice, went on the stage, as usual; but under the designation of "a gentleman, his first appearance."

Thus, in every single part, was he constantly sustaining two characters—the one in the drama, and the other, that of a country debutant—which he accomplished with entire success. The bailiffs were convinced their man had given them the slip, and after a time, like Charles Stuart's pursuers, they passed quietly off, whilst the king of the joke sat grinning aloft, at an elevated window in the building.

In the course of this season, Mr. Aaron Graham, chief police magistrate and one of the committee of management at Drury Lane Theatre, renewed an application to Elliston, which he had previously opened by letter, for his services at that establishment.

The fortunes of Drury were greatly depressed, and the recent failure of a comedy, "The Heart of Oak," as it was called, had left scarcely a shot in the locker. Elliston, however, did not so nimbly obey the magistrate's writ as was expected, and Justice Graham entered up judgment against him in another epistle full of invectives.

The fact was, Elliston had certain secondary pursuits which were greatly assisting his income, and rendered him indifferent to the proposal in question. He was giving, at this period, private instruction in reading and reciting the English classics, and had as much employment of this description as he could

conveniently despatch, in addition to his other professional duties.

These engagements afforded him also a pleasing variety, by no means unexceptionable to his constitution; his pupils could scarcely fail of being fond of their master, while he himself was a kind of *mignon* in the family circle; and if sometimes he felt a self-accusation in having slightly cajoled the husband, he found, not unfrequently, a conscientious satisfaction in having rendered the wife unquestionably happy.

Graham, however, still kept close at his heels; and as there really appeared, from what we have just noticed, some little danger of our hero falling into the magistrate's hands, under less seemly circumstances than a professional alliance, it is as well, perhaps, that he at length listened to the Drury Lane *overture;* closing with the proposal now made to him, for a three-years' engagement, at twenty pounds per week, and a benefit at the most favourable period of the season.

On the 20th September, 1804, Elliston opened the campaign at Drury Lane, by acting *Rolla*, and was flatteringly received on his new ground. On the 25th, he played *Doricourt*, and on the 27th, having repeated *Rolla*, he started, on leave of absence, for Weymouth, where again, at the express command of the king, he was appointed to superintend a fête and perform a few nights at the theatre.

The fête took place on the 29th, on board the royal yacht, and was given in honour of the birth-day of the Duchess of Wirtemberg. As their Majesties entered the vessel, Elliston and Miss de Camp,* in the characters of a sailor and his wife, delivered a metrical address.

Patriotic rhapsodies were, at this period—the renewal of the French war—much in vogue, on our theatres. They were well enough for the special purpose, but the greater part of them, as poetic compositions, miserable examples.

We quote some extracts from the one in question, merely on the grounds of the distinguished occasion.

(*The sailor breaks from his companions, exclaiming—*)

" I tell you I *will* speak—so stand aside,
And let a sailor who has long defied
His country's foes, for once approach his king,
The humble tribute of respect to bring.
If thus your *People* feel, what tongue can tell
The rapturous joy which must the bosom swell
Of Her, who distant in a foreign land,
Far from a Father and his fostering hand,
Who, at this moment, whilst ' her Health !' goes round
And the deck echoes to the festive sound,
In fond imagination views the scene,
And sighs to think what barriers intervene
To stop the thanks which hang upon her tongue,
Intent on him from whom her being sprung.

* Afterwards, Mrs. Charles Kemble.

(*Sailor's wife interrupts the Tar.*)

"My worthy mate, have you forgot the name
Of old *St. Michael*, of goose-killing fame;
How, every year, on this auspicious day,
Our vows to him with ready teeth we pay;
When cackling animals by instinct feel
The sharp incision of the eager steel?
Then trust me, Sire, henceforth when tempests roar,
And the winds whistle through my cottage door—
While in my solitary bed I'm laid,
And fears for Tom my anxious soul invade,
The thought that 'tis for *you* my sailor braves
The battle's danger, and the stormy waves,
Shall make my heart with patriot ardour burn,
And hope anticipate his glad return."

There was more—much more of this; and when we assure our readers the extracts we have made, are the "quality" passages of the Poetic Address, they will feel fully satisfied that nothing less than the honour of repeating them in the presence of the good old king, could recompense Elliston and his accomplished companion, for charging their imagination with such material.

On the 5th of October, Elliston returned to Drury Lane, when he acted *Archer*. *Charles*, in the "School for Scandal;" *Don Felix*, *Orlando*, *Young Bevil*, in the "Conscious Lovers;" *Wilding*, *Octavian*, *Benedict*, *Faulkland*, *Hamlet*, *Richard the Third*, *Belcour*, and *Ranger*, he also played in quick succession; and on the 31st January, he appeared in

the part of the *Duke Aranza*, the first representation of "The Honeymoon."

This highly popular drama had been long slighted—rejected, indeed, by the management of Drury Lane. The manuscript which had been thrown amongst the dusty piles of the condemned cell, fell by mere chance a second time, under the notice of the turnkey, and as a kind of desperate alternative, (there being no "novelty in preparation,") the play, with due ceremony, was led out for execution. It was, however, strongly cast; and after the first rehearsal, there was an evident change of opinion amonst the actors; for although the main incidents of this comedy are far from original, yet there was such a jucund diversity of character—such an agreeable succession of well arranged action, and so happy an adaptation of the vigorous diction of the "old masters," that all doubts were ultimately removed as to its verdict with the public.

And well indeed might all apprehensions have vanished, for the result was triumphant. It would be of little purpose to speak of any part or division in the acting of either Elliston or Miss Duncan—where and what to choose would be the difficulty—any special notice or selection would be, in point of fact, a declaration of the whole, for there was no moment in which the spectator had been unequally delighted. Every actor in the piece was well

affected to his particular allotment, and no characters were ever better performed than all the casts upon this occasion.

Poor Tobin, the author of the play, lived not to witness the triumph of his muse. He died, unfortunately, at Cork, a few months only before this first representation.

"The Honeymoon" was acted twenty-eight times in the season—twice by command of their Majesties—and ran eleven consecutive nights—a course which would undoubtedly have been extended, but for that sudden meteoric appearance in the dramatic horizon, which now drew after it the inquiring eyes of all observers—namely, "The Young Roscius."

So rich and varied was the histrionic excellence which Elliston displayed in this part, *Aranza*, that had his quality been hitherto equivocal, or altogether unaccredited, this event would at once have placed him "ac prope socco," and the favourite delegate of the Comic Muse.*

Elliston receives the following letter from his attached friend, Mr. Gore,—

"Well, my cockmate, I congratulate you as many times as I can pack them between this and Christmas, on your laurels. Fame is not quite so

* The principal cast of characters in the "Honeymoon" was as follows:—*Duke Aranza*, Elliston; *Rolando*, Bannister; *Lampedo*, Mathews; *Jacques*, Collins; *Juliana*, Miss Duncan; *Volante*, Miss Mellon; *Hostess*, Mrs. Sparks.

nimble-footed as scandal, and yet your fresh renown has reached us long ago. But this is not the first satisfaction you have given on the scene of the 'Honeymoon.' Mrs. Elliston declares you acquitted yourself ten years ago in this interesting situation quite as well, though the world didn't know it.

"Holman has been playing here four nights to excellent houses—*Jaffier*, *Macbeth*, *Benedict*, and *Earl of Essex*. On the stage, he looks as handsome as ever, though too much *en bon point*, for that easy elegance, by which he was once distinguished.

"I have heard something of your little Roscius —this step from the playground to the playhouse I cannot approve. I observe the lady who was to have performed with him is gone to Ireland—Mrs. Litchfield. Pray who is to take her place?—surely not Mrs. Siddons? The character for his *debut* is well chosen, *Dorilas* in 'Merope.'

"We have, by report, here a second Siddons in Miss Smith. She interests all greatly, and some are thoroughly fascinated by her. From myself I can say nothing—I have not seen her."

Elliston's appearance at Drury Lane was a subject of warm congratulation by his friend and patron, Lord Harcourt, from whom, some weeks subsequently, he received the following:—

"Harcourt House.

"SIR,—A party of my friends, and equally your admirers, have solicited my interest to induce you to indulge them with a reading, on some evening, at Miss Berry's, North Audley Street, previous to your departure from London. I trust I may be able to make one in that circle, but, for the present, a return of erysipelas on my forehead, requiring starch plasters, renders it impossible for me to stir abroad. As you are accustomed to the sight of spectres, goblins, and animated simulacra, if you will call on me about any mid-day, I will exhibit to you my own frightful features—you may have courage to look on them. Whether at this advanced season of the year, and at a moment when the public mind is greatly agitated by concerns of national importance, it would be prudent in you to take a benefit, you, perhaps, would be a far better judge than myself. This I can say, that should I not be prevented by my attendance on her Majesty, I will certainly not only go myself to the play, in the event of your benefit, but will promote the occasion in every way I may be able.

"Of gentlemanly acting, I have often spoken to you—the love of applause has betrayed many an actor into tricks, he has been utterly ashamed of afterwards. Wilkes, I believe, never fell into this error. O'Brien, I am sure, never did, nor have I ever witnessed this frailty in you—never 'to

make the unskilful laugh, make the judicious grieve.'

"Our stage is still barbarous in respect of costume. A short waist, a modish head-dress, are often coupled in the old plays, with a Grecian robe and a Gothic ruff. I have seen Woodward and Dodd wear white satin heels to their shoes; and Lewis, too, in such a dress as could only be fitting a mountebank in a fair. Mr. O'Brien made this also an object of his best study.

"I saw the 'Guardian' the other night. Mr. Murray and Miss Wallis, in their respective characters, were absolute perfection, but the *Young Clackit*, though represented by a performer of real merits, was marred by being ill-dressed.

"I wish you could see Mr. Fawcett in 'A Cure for the Heart-Ache:' his representation of the rustic is nature herself. Garrick never exhibited a closer portrait. "Your humble servant,

"HARCOURT."

The benefit took place on the 26th of April, and was tolerably good, the earl and party occupying a box. Elliston, on this occasion, produced a piece entitled, "The Venetian Outlaw," dramatized by himself, from Lewis's Romance, "The Bravo of Venice." The production was successful, and was repeated sundry times before the termination of the season.

[Charles Robert Elliston, born 5th Nov. 1804. Godfather, James Slade, Esq.]

CHAPTER XI.

Colman disposes of half his interest in the Haymarket Theatre—Winston—Failures at that establishment—Elliston's *fracas* with Mathews—Statement of the case by the actors—"Three and the Deuce"—Outbreak at the Haymarket—Insurrection of the Tailors—Liston's first appearance—Elliston plays *Sir Harry Wildair*—An awkward criticism—Humorous outrage on Dowton—His revenge—Separation of Colman and Elliston—Warner Phipps—His admonitory letter—Mr. Perry—London Clubs—"The Humbug"—Forms of matriculation—Elliston at Dublin—Meets with a brother runaway.

COLMAN'S negotiation with Messrs. Morris, Winston,* and Tahourdine, for the sale of one moiety of the Haymarket property, and the result of a purchase by those gentlemen, greatly disconcerted the subject of these Memoirs.

* Mr. Winston died on the 9th of July last, at his house in Charles Street, Covent Garden. From this gentleman, the writer of the present memoirs received the greater part of the documents, letters, &c., appertaining to the life of Elliston, and also much theatrical matter incidental to the actor's time. Mr. Winston was remarkable for his accurate information on dramatic affairs and histrionic biography, connected with the last

Again had Elliston been baffled in his views of partnership—Bath, Liverpool, the Haymarket!—thrice had he been thwarted in his besetting ambition; and he now met Colman, at the commencement of his third and last season on the Haymarket boards, with no feelings of cordiality, and scarcely the sentiment of good will.

The cause of the above sale was the heavy loss on the two experimental seasons, particularly the last, in which Colman had made an effort to rival his gigantic neighbour the Opera-house, encountering the monster on its own grounds, and attempting to wield those mighty engines fitted only to the grasp of his opponent.

With the courage of David, but without his judgment, Colman beheld the Goliah still unhurt; and having exhausted his resources in a vain attempt at the splendour and pageantry of *ballet*, was now compelled to take steps of a far different fashion, and put up with the more homely condition of "ordinary time" and common sense.

"The Enchanted Island," which he had lately produced, was an illusion in opposite effects to those he had anticipated—that the money *went* like magic,

half century, which, to the lovers of the stage, rendered his society highly agreeable. He was one of the most active and serviceable friends Elliston ever possessed.

In 1835, Mr. Morris became sole proprietor of the Haymarket Theatre by purchase of all the shares.

there is no denying, for the manager expended on this ill-judged experiment no less than 1600*l.*, of which his "Enchanted Island" did not recover to him one shilling.

Elliston was likewise deprived of his position as stage-manager, that office being now given to Winston; but he still retained its emoluments, which, with his pay as actor, amounted, at the close of the season, (1805,) to 559*l.*

On the 18th of July, a *petite comedie*, written by Cherry, under the title of "The Village; or, The World's Epitome," was produced at this theatre.

Considerable opposition attended the progress of the piece; and in the second act, Elliston, under the old impulse, stepped forward, begging earnestly that the audience would hear it to the close, which request he actually impressed on his bended knee; an appeal powerful as that of Lord Brougham himself, who no doubt had treasured up the effect, at the concluding sentence of his celebrated speech on Reform. The petition was granted—but the "World's Epitome," unlike "the whole bill," did not pass into a law, for it was damned on the first reading, and the curtain fell amidst the yells and hootings of an indignant audience.

The *froissement*, however, was not confined to the body of spectators, for a difference taking place between Mathews and Elliston, in the *coulisses*, the former accusing our hero of some neglect, Elliston

responded in that peculiar language which never fails "to stir men's blood," and a blow from his irritated antagonist was the prompt rejoinder.

At the commencement of the farce, Elliston, under great excitement, made a rambling appeal to the audience, but here also he appeared to get the worst of it, although he had withdrawn the play, at the sentence of the house, which had so emphatically pronounced, there should be no two bites at a *Cherry*.

On the following day, a letter by Robert William appeared in the public prints.

"Haymarket Theatre, July 20, 1805.

"SIR,—Some misrepresentations having taken place respecting an occurrence at this theatre, last night, in which I was a party, I beg leave to state it correctly.

"It is true that a momentary altercation did arise between Mr. Mathews and myself, which was attended with some warmth on both sides, but it is not true that I 'was knocked down twice,' nor indeed that I was knocked down at all. Nor is it true that, I was placed in any situation humiliating to the feelings of a man, or derogatory to the character of a gentleman.

"What the circumstances were, I will not intrude on the public. I only explain what they were not. It is enough for me to say that, there is every probability of Mr. Mathews and myself becoming

friendly with each other; and were it not so, there would be no one more willing than myself, to acknowledge his zeal at all times, for the interests of his profession and the welfare of the establishment to which he might belong.

" It has been alleged that I am extremely officious in addressing the audience, on many occasions. If to my office, as stage-manager, the term *officious* be applied, I do plead guilty to the performance of my duty, but I do not confess to any less worthy signification of the word. I trouble the audience with observations only when I may deem it necessary, and always endeavour to do so with respect.

" I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

" R. W. Elliston."

" Having been bystanders during the difference which occurred between Mr. Elliston and Mr. Mathews, at the Haymarket Theatre, on Friday night last, we feel it incumbent on us to declare that, the statement of Mr. Elliston having been knocked down on that occasion, is totally void of truth; and that no circumstances took place, which were in any respect dishonourable to that gentleman, or, indeed, to either of them.

" Robert Palmer.
" Charles Taylor.
" John Palmer.
" W. T. Hatton.
" F. G. Waldron, (Prompter.)"

Thus ended the affair in the theatre itself, but innumerable were the squibs let off in the public journals, from the ashes of this discord. Newspaper letters on private grievances, are fair game to the idle public, who beat about for amusement; and although Elliston had satisfactorily proved he had not been "knocked down by Mathews," yet he laid himself open to so many sly shots, from quills in ambuscade, that it required his whole armour of equanimity to preserve him from being positively riddled.

Elliston's recent triumph in the part of *Duke Aranza*, at Drury Lane, was now succeeded by an event at the Haymarket, only less brilliant from the nature of the drama in which he appeared—a musical entertainment, entitled "Three and the Deuce."

This piece had been produced at the same theatre ten years previous to the present; the principal part or parts, having been written expressly for the display of Mr. Bannister's versatility of genius; an experiment, however, which did not meet with a favourable reception.

Elliston, who had heretofore accomplished some triumphs not dissimilar to the present—namely, a decided success on Bannister's own ground—was by no means deterred from the trial, by the records of the theatrical *decade*. The fantastic triune imper-

sonation suited admirably his fancy, whilst emulation kept up a state of irritability, which could only be allayed by playing the character without delay. The versatility of powers (if we may venture so lofty a term) necessary to success in the part of "*The Singles*" might very reasonably have attracted public favour to this "announcement in the bills;" for Elliston was both a pleasing singer and an elegant dancer, while his *savoir faire* of the mock heroic and perception of broad farce, all conspired to the fair promise.

The piece was acted for his own benefit, and the trial was another decided hit; like Diana, the actor was equally divine under his three phases; and the *petite comedie* was, from this time, assigned to him, by legal conveyance of popular approbation, his own freehold.

In the course of this season, another outbreak took place in the Little Theatre, which, commencing in deep tragedy, concluded very properly in downright farce.

Dowton had chosen for his benefit Foote's burlesque piece, entitled "The Tailors," or, "A Tragedy for Warm Weather," in which the fraternity of the thimble, were not treated with the respect which their importance in all ages appears to have enjoyed; and they now resolved, like the Knights of the *Shoulder Knot* at Bath, some years before,

(on the representation of High Life below Stairs,") to vindicate the dignity of their order, and at the same time to shew a spirit.

A pallid battalion of tailors occupied (as well they might) the *dress* boxes, another operative line threaded the pit, whilst not a few were prepared for backing the suit in the galleries. Dowton had advertised "The Tailors," but they had resolved on "*Measure for Measure.*" Being well assured that the first blow is half the battle, Dowton, on his appearance in the part of *Francisco*, was assailed by no less a missile than a pair of tremendous shears, which would at once have cut the thread of his existence, had the act been an echo to the will.

This pretty strong demonstration of hostility, caused the immediate interference of the constables, and in three minutes, the uproar was at the best. The tailors, it is true, were three to one; but recollecting how many go to a man, it is not surprising they were presently overmatched. Some of the ringleaders, or, rather foremen in the house, were handed over to the public office, where Mr. Aaron Graham, like *Priuli*, was at that moment sitting.

Here good fortune appeared, in some degree, to attend the tailors; for our friend Aaron being, as we have already had occasion to notice, in the interests of Drury Lane Theatre, was too well pleased at any mortification which might attend another booth in the fair; and with the exception, there-

fore, of the desperate little mechanic convicted of sheer malice against Dowton, the whole party were dismissed—or, we should rather have said, were sent about their business.

Thus terminated this thimble *emeute*. The tailors claimed the victory; under which *prestige* they felt entire satisfaction, and quitting the play-house, were content for the future to appear on no other boards than their own.

On the 15th of September, of the same season, Liston made his first appearance in London, at this theatre, in the character of *Sheep-face*, in the "Village Lawyer." His peculiar talent was at once acknowledged, and secured him his patent for life in public favour. As of Tarleton, (whom, in fact, he must somewhat have resembled in style,) we can truly say,—

> ——— "cujus vox, vultus, actio possit
> Ex Heraclito reddere Democritum."

Hazlitt has pointedly said, "Liston is an actor hardly belonging to the present age. Had he lived in the time of Colley Cibber, what a splendid niche he would have given him in his Apology!"

On the 5th of October, a revival of Farquhar's comedy "The Constant Couple" was advertised for that evening's representation, at Drury Lane Theatre.

Late in the afternoon, handbills had been circu-

lated, stating, that in consequence of the sudden illness of Mr. Elliston, who was to have personated *Sir Harry Wildair*, the comedy would unavoidably be deferred; "She Stoops to Conquer" was the substitute.

The "Constant Couple" not having been acted for some years previous to this event, and public curiosity being considerably excited in respect of the present cast of its hero, the theatre was numerously attended. As to the handbills, they of course had met the eye of but a small portion of the "British public," and the greater part of the audience, under a sense of disappointment, felt inclined to "take it out" (as the money-lenders express it) in some other article, and had a row for their money. Due satisfaction being obtained in this manner, Goldsmith was entered "*vice*" Farquhar, and the substitution was permitted to proceed.

But on the following day one of those awkward *contretemps* occurred, of which we blush to confess we have met with more examples than the present, in the course of our theatrical reading.

He is but a dull swain—a poor, pitiful lover, we verily believe, who cannot anticipate the whimsy of his mistress, *before* the little caprice has being within her—one of those instances is it, in which effects are allowed "to lead causes." And he is but a bungling conjuror—a clumsy, heavy-fingered jack-a-lent, who cannot tell you the very ace, knave,

or queen, dancing in your thoughts, even *before* you have made up your mind on the colour of your card. But what is permitted to the lover, or looked for in the conjuror, may perhaps become a questionable quality in reasonable beings, who are expected to work by the square and rule, and not like those, who in their mistake of courage, attempt to display it by setting truth at defiance.

Not to detain the reader longer in our display of metaphor; on the subsequent day, as we have said, to this provisional comedy at Drury Lane, the following *critique!* appeared in a journal, called "The British Neptune:"—

"Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Last night, Farquhar's sprightly comedy, 'The Constant Couple,' was most barbarously murdered at this theatre. The lively knight was by Elliston reduced to a dull piece of affectation—it was *Tom Errand* in *Beau Clincher's* clothes. *Clincher* was altogether lost in the hands of Bannister—it approached Farquhar as nearly as the frog resembled the ox in the fable.

"Miss Mellon was not thoroughly unpleasant in her representation of *Angelica;* but criticism has not language severe enough to deprecate the impertinence of Barrymore, presuming to put himself forward in the part of *Colonel Standard.* We were scarcely less offended with Dowton's attempt at *Alderman Smuggler*—it was only, not absolutely the worst thing we ever saw."

Such was the "mirror" in which the Drury Lane company—ladies and gentlemen—beheld their unhappy features at their toilet, on the following morning—Sunday. On their swollen heads, black eyes, and lacerated noses, they gazed in silent stupefaction. They had clearly been cruelly belaboured by elves—the victims of pawwawing—in their sleep, (for Saturday nights are the Sabbaths of witches,) and acknowledged the providence of having escaped with life itself.

They however determined, like the petulant beauty, to be revenged upon their looking-glass; and with all the violence of the fair, Elliston, Barrymore, Dowton, and Bannister, commenced a prosecution against the old "Neptune," which would inevitably have brought him from his coral palace, on the dry floor of the Court of King's Bench, but for the mercy of the very mortals themselves whom he had so deeply injured. The prosecution was stayed—a compromise was entered into—the proprietors of the paper paying of course all expenses, and a supplemental fifty pounds to the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund.

Whilst on the subject of "outrages" we must beg leave to narrate an act of surpassing audacity, to the cost of poor Dowton.

In the old Drury Lane Theatre, many of the dressing-rooms were on the level of the landing

beneath the stage. During the representation of some piece, wherein Dowton had to be lowered by means of a trap through the stage, his face being turned towards the audience, Elliston and De Camp, who were concealed below, had provided themselves with small ratan canes, and as their brother actor, who was playing a serious part, was slowly descending to solemn music, they applied their sticks sharply and rapidly to the thinly-clad calves of his legs.

Poor Dowton, whose duty it was to look as dignified and intrenchant as a ghost, smarting under the pain, could scarcely refrain the expression of it by a positive screech, whilst he curvetted with his heels, like a horse in Ducrow's arena. Choking with rage, he was at length wholly let down, and being now completely out of sight of the audience, he looked earnestly round to discover the base perpetrators of the violence. Elliston and his companion had, of course, absconded—it was *decamp* with each of them; but at this moment Charles Holland, dressed to the very finish of fashion, worthy of Cibber himself, was crossing from one of the rooms. The enraged actor, mistaking his man, and believing, by Holland's imperturbability of manner, he was in fact the real offender, seized a mop at that moment immersed in most unseemly water, and thrusting it in his face, utterly destroyed wig, ruffles, point lace, and every particular of his elaborate attire.

In vain Holland protested his innocence, and implored for mercy—his cries only whetted the appetite of the other's revenge, and again and again, the saturated mop was at work over his finery.

Somewhat appeased at last, Dowton quitted his victim; but in the meantime, the prompter's bell had announced the commencement of the piece, in which Holland was to have appeared. What was to be done? The drama was proceeding—Holland already called to the stage! all was confusion thrice confounded. An apology for "*the sudden indisposition of Mr. Holland*" was made, and the public informed that De Camp had *kindly undertaken to go on for the part!*"

In April (1806) Elliston applied for permission of the Haymarket authorities to advertise Colman's pleasant little comedy, "Blue Devils," for his benefit at Drury Lane, to which he received the following direct answer:—

"The proprietors of the Haymarket Theatre present their compliments to Mr. Elliston, and acquaint him that past circumstances prevent their acceding to the request, Mr. Elliston has so unexpectedly done them the honour of expressing."

This note was in Colman's own hand-writing. Such was the acetous fermentation of that sweet friendship, which had been so lately sealed in pledges of choice Madeira, and witnessed in the little

"rump-parliament" at Waldron's. "At lovers' perjuries, they say, Jove laughs," but theatrical friendships are a joke much beyond them. An April day has greater certainty, and a flash of lightning as much durability—

> "They quarrel 'bout a pin or feather,
> And wonder how they came together."

It was at this period of his life, that Elliston became first acquainted with a gentleman, who proved one of his truest and most valuable friends, during his professional career—Mr. Warner Phipps, actuary of the Albion Assurance Company—a man of sound understanding, acute judgment, and rare sincerity. To Mr. Phipps, Elliston was indebted for the best advice in his repeated difficulties, and for pecuniary aids, which never were denied when the object appeared reasonable in itself, and creditable to his good name.

In the summer of this year, our hero was engaged principally in Dublin, to which place his friend transmitted any London intelligence, which he deemed might be useful or gratifying. Amongst his earliest letters was the following:—

"Neither the fame you have acquired, nor the wealth you ought to be accumulating, should satisfy your own conscience, as certainly they cannot acquit you to your family, for that disregard which you shew to society, as a member of it. Do not

deceive yourself by fancying you are merely despising appearances, by violating the proprieties of life. True—a man may live too servilely to the world's opinion, but it follows not, that he should contemn the conventions and the decencies of the commonwealth. I will not offend you by descending to *particulars*. I know I am speaking to a man of discernment—I hope also to one of fortitude.

"If I have as yet not said enough, I should still fall short, though I were to write a volume.

"I shall at once, therefore, dismiss this part of my letter.

"You may know, perhaps, in what manner the Haymarket has shuffled on since your estrangement. Fawcett does not take kindly to your comedy, and Rae positively burlesques your tragedy. The former, in his *real* department, has unquestionably great power, but *Vapid*, *Megrim*, *Bob Handy*, and many others he has lately meddled with, require the touches of another pencil. Rae is not, perhaps, without effects, but they are chiefly of person. His form is good, his countenance impressive, and his voice of considerable compass; but his deportment is loose, his eye dumb, and his tones without variety or modulation. I can say nothing of his understanding, for I have not been in his company. As to his *Octavian*, I never witnessed a more inflated piece of Jack Puddingism in my days.

"I am convinced it should not be your object to

play in London, both during winter and summer. In the latter season, take your Drury fame into the country—you will make more money, preserve your health, and delight your fancy by variety of scene.

"I enclose you a pasquinade, which I understand was uttered aloud from the boxes, the other night, and which appeared in a morning print of yesterday. What it wants in wit is made up in truth:—

"'Mr. Rae—Mr. Rae—
Ah! prithee—go away—
You are a sorry lad,
And you act so very bad
That you'll surely drive me mad,
If you stay—Mr. Rae!'"

An attempt was now made by a certain clique of the leading spirits of Drury Lane, in conjunction with sundry town wits, (and amongst them, Theodore Hook, then a young man,) for a revival of some of the London clubs, which had lately fallen into abeyance. Elliston was the very *Monk* of the "Restoration."

Their immediate object was a resuscitation of the "Humbug Club," which had originally been projected by Mr. Perry, proprietor of the "Morning Chronicle," and from whom the new party received many of the old forms and ceremonies.

Mr. Perry, in fact, "gave the people a constitution," at the head of which he was nominally placed.

Colman, who, from foregone conclusions, " was unable to appear," was yet, like *Ariel*, a most potent agent, invisible, and duly executed the good bidding of Perry, the *Prospero*, on the enchanted soil of the Oxford Coffee House, where the roystering crew were fraternized.

" The Humbug"—that is, the " old original"—had been assembled on the first month of several years, by a proclamation, issued by Mr. Perry, who was designated " *Humbugallo Rex*," and countersigned by his secretary, "*Screech.*" These proclamations were exceedingly humorous, and may be read on the files of the " Chronicle" of the period.

Mr. Pryse Gordon, in his " Personal Memoirs," gives the following notice of this association :—

" When a new member was proposed, he was admitted blindfolded, with much ceremony. He was then conducted by a member to the bottom of a large apartment, whence he mounted a dozen of almost perpendicular steps, being warned, that if he slipped, he would inevitably break his neck. When the candidate had ascended the very summit of the tottering fabric, the bandage was suddenly snatched from his eyes, and he found himself standing on a platform of about a foot square, elevated some ten feet above the inquisitors. Around the table below, were sitting the president, his secretary, (*Screech*,) and twelve judges, all masked, with beards low as their knees, and black gowns. In the centre of the

table was a caldron of spirits of wine, which threw a most infernal glare on the whole assembly." Certain questions were then put to the bewildered candidate, which if, in the judgment of the court, he answered satisfactorily, and respectfully bowed three times in the act of descending, he was duly declared a member of the body.

But as none of these things were possible, no candidate ever succeeded in passing his examination. However, as all is fish which comes to the devil's net, the infernal president usually extended a grace to the failing votary, and he was ultimately matriculated.

Bannister, who had been a member of the "old original," was joyfully received into the association of the Oxford Coffee House. He was here frequently president, when Johnstone fulfilled the duties of "*Screech.*"

The following examination of a candidate before these two "*Jacks* in office," took place, as witnessed by the hero of our Memoir. The usual question being put—

"Pray, sir, were you present at your birth?"

Reply—"No; I was a changeling before I was born."

"Pray, sir, what is the stock of wisdom you purpose investing in this society?"

"I come here to get wisdom."

"True; you are of that class which experience sometimes renders wise."

As to the termination of these weekly meetings, that was after the manner of most societies, dull or spiritual, homely or polite—namely, the best liquor which could be produced. Like death, this levelled all distinctions—the dull were elevated and the fanciful depressed—one common tint pervaded the whole canvass, and Punch and *Egalité*, the last usurpers.

But notwithstanding the efforts of this "gallant crew," and all their appliances to boot, the new "Humbug" lasted but for a season—the "Restoration," in fact, was but of short duration; and a Revolution came, which swept from state and being, this last of the Humbugs.* The Oxford Coffee House affair failed, as most revivals have been found to do. When once a dog has had his day, the best voltaic battery will but make him wag his tail.

In the course of Elliston's brief visit to Dublin, he was surprised, one morning, by a visit from a dashing young fellow, who, unceremoniously enter-

* About the end of the last century, many of these clubs were in existence. At the British Coffee House, Cockspur-street, was "The Anonymous," to which Perry, and his co-proprietor, Gray, belonged. "Many eminent men," says Mr. Pryse Gordon, "were members of this fantastic society, which lasted till more than half of the club were dead. Professor Porson, Dr. Burney, Dr. Raine, J. Kemble, Howardine, (the poet,) *Monk* Lewis, Capt. Morris, and occasionally, the Duke of Norfolk."

ing his room, grasped him by the hand with the tenderness of a vice, invoking on him many days of joy and good fortune. Startled by this amicable assault, Elliston in vain cudgelled his brains, to bring his friend into court and recollection, and was, in fact, as much perplexed, as at the unexpected meeting with poor Alice, three years before.

Far more amused than mortified at the comedian's dilemma, the stranger, in all the exultation of high spirits and rosy prosperity, bantered him for awhile on his frail pledges of friendship, playing off, at the same time, a thousand *bouffouneries*, which, if accounted by his self-applause, would have thrown Carlini or Liston into the shade. Exploding, at length, into a roar of laughter, which verily shook the little quadrangular chamber in which they had met—

"Why, don't you know me? Donald?" cried he —"Donald, at Saint Paul's?—Don't you recollect, Donald—*pug* Donald? Robert!"

The veil immediately dropped from before the eyes of our hero, who at once recalled to memory his truant schoolfellow, "pug Donald," beyond all doubt, and the many occasions on which each being soundly whipped for their common fault, the birch of Dr. Roberts might well be supposed to have "twined their hearts in one."

About the time Robert William took flight from St. Paul's to Bath, his schoolmate, Donald, made

an equally abrupt excursion to the sea coast—one for the stage, the other on board ship.

Donald had secreted himself, like a rat, in the hold of a coaster, which having put to sea, he crept from his hiding-place, begging, in piteous accents, the mercy of the master, and that he might be received as a cabin-boy. His prayer was granted—in fact, it was too late for refusal—and in this situation he remained for full three years.

At the age of eighteen, he was made mate of a vessel sailing from North Britain, and there being a press on the river just at this time, Donald was illegally seized by a man-of-war's gang, and put on board a tender, whence he was shipped for the coast of Africa. Being a good seaman, he was rated able, and his exemplary conduct being noticed by the first lieutenant, he was speedily appointed quarter-master. In a brush with a French frigate, Donald behaved with so much gallantry, that he was placed on the quarter-deck as midshipman.

He had now been gazetted lieutenant three months, and having been a week in Dublin, had discovered, in knocking about the town, the companion of his early days, his partner in many a stolen afternoon, and a large shareholder in their joint-stock of flagellation.

Elliston was immediately made known to such of Donald's family, who were at that time resident in Dublin. He passed several gala days in the society

of his friend; and their imaginations being so vividly recalled to the scenes of youth, they conducted themselves, in some instances, so much like school-boys, that they were once more joint tenants of the same narrow apartment, but that—the watch-house.

Donald of course went to see his friend act, and well, indeed, might he have been delighted, for this occasion was, in fact, the very first on which he had ever entered the doors of a playhouse.

CHAPTER XII.

Death of Dr. Elliston—Elliston's letter to his wife—Strange reports—"The Curfew"—Margravine of Anspach—Private Theatricals—Critique on the genius of Mr. Young—Elliston and his landlady at Liverpool—A cozy evening—Hob and Knob—"Star" and Star—Country theatres—Whimsical occurrences and expedients—"The Castle Spectre"—An aged company—An actor mystified—Elliston in his element—Humorous adventure with a French prisoner.

THE timely success which had attended the production of "The Honeymoon," induced the directors of Drury Lane theatre to apply again to their piles of neglected MSS., and, like other coquettes, to turn their second thoughts towards some of those offers, they had too unceremoniously slighted in past seasons.

Rejected comedies, mouldy by despair, and we may truly say, torn by rough usage, were ogled from their obscurity; and as the frail managers contemplated the doleful ditty—

> "Any one of these, which I slighted before,
> Will do very well for me,"

they fortunately fixed on a second of the Tobin fa-

mily, and the "Curfew" became, at once, the reigning favourite.

This drama having been forthwith put into rehearsal, was advertised for representation for the 14th of February (1807); two days previous to which, it was announced as indefinitely postponed, owing to the sudden absence of Mr. Elliston, who was to have performed the principal character.

The Master of Sidney College (Dr. Elliston) had been for some weeks in declining health, and his illness having now become alarming, his nephew received intelligence which induced him at once to proceed to Cambridge.

Elliston found his uncle rapidly sinking, and with no hope of recovery. He was received with great affection by his venerable relative, who, in pardoning his offences, had no slight category to remit; whilst the exhortation he gave him to honourable conduct, testified the sincerity of his forgiveness.

The Doctor did not survive this interview many days. He died full of honour—in the respect of all men who had value for integrity and well-directed talents.

Elliston, in a letter to his wife, says—

"My uncle—my best friend—expired this morning, and God will bless him! These are moments to awaken the coldest spirit to expressions of fervent gratitude, and to a full sense of departed goodness—they are too common—and little respect is

therefore due to feelings of so ordinary a nature as mine; but from the bottom of my heart I pray for him, and believe he will be happy.

"Two days before my uncle died, he put a passage from Dr. Johnson into my hands, which out of veneration to both I transcribe to you:—

"'Many things necessary are omitted, because we vainly imagine they may be always performed; and what cannot be done without pain will for ever be delayed, if the time for doing it be left unsettled, No corruption is great but by long negligence, which can scarcely prevail in a mind regularly and frequently awakened, by periodical remorse. He that thus breaks his life into parts, will find in himself a desire to distinguish every stage of his existence by some improvement, and delight himself with the approach of the day of recollection, as of the time which is to begin a new series of virtue and felicity.'"

The Doctor* directed by will 600*l.* to be divided equally between his nephews, R. W. Elliston and the son of Professor Martyn. To each of his grandchildren, of which there were twenty, he left 100*l.*, to be paid with accumulation, as they severally attained their twenty-first year. As residuary lega-

* Dr. William Elliston, Master of Sidney College, Cambridge, and Rector of Keyston, Huntingdonshire—in the gift of Earl Fitzwilliam—died 11th Feb. 1807, in his 75th year.

tees, Elliston and his cousin Martyn received 1700*l.* each.

Out of the late occurrence, some of those wild reports, which, like the rank, fat weed, find root in the thinnest soil, were presently spread through the dramatic circles of the metropolis;—first, that Elliston had been bequeathed 20,000*l.*, and an estate in Huntingdonshire, on condition of his quitting the stage; secondly, that he had repudiated the Muses, and embraced the Fathers—Thalia for St. Chrysostom—the Green-room for the Cloister; and a third rumour, that he was about to found a dramatic college, of which he was to be nominated provost, with power, under a charter, for admitting licentiates, and conferring histrionic degrees! Certainly he returned to London bearing on his brow the very stamp of an epoch—his very step was eventful, and he bore around him an atmosphere of fate.

On the 19th, however, the misty conglomeration of surmises vanished from the public mind, and Tobin's "Curfew" was produced, Elliston having resumed his duties at Drury Lane, by sustaining the principal part in that drama. The "Curfew" was repeated for fifteen consecutive nights, and on a few additional occasions in the season.

Triumphs are met not with in coveys—the plumage which distinguished the "Honeymoon," did not clothe this second flight of the poet; but the "Curfew" was at least successful, and brought money to the treasury.

A similar fate attended Gay's "Polly," which he produced on the great success of his "Beggars' Opera"—a common result of second attempts. "If the original Polly," says Hazlitt, "had not had more winning ways with her, she would hardly have had so many countesses for representatives."

For his benefit, Elliston played *Vapid*, *Vapour*, and *Don Juan*—the receipts being four hundred and seventy-six pounds!

Elliston being known to the Margravine of Anspach, having figured at one or two of her private dramatical entertainments, applied to her, on the part of a friend, about to publish a Theatrical Tour, for permission to introduce a notice of her tasteful *Salle Dramatique*, at Brandenberg House, into the work—to which her highness replies—

"Sir,—In answer to y^{r} request, I inform you that there is likewise a Theatre in my Wood here, of a Construction so peculiarly pretty, that it would perhaps be y^{e} most interesting Description in y$_{r}$ friend's Tour. I shall write to my Housekeeper at B. House, to let him view the Theatre there; but I wish him not to print anything ab^{t} me or my Establishments, without first letting me see what he intends writ^{e}.

"I have been much assailed by printed Falsehoods—the Newspapers appear to say what they please, and pack Stories as some people do the

Cards, for the Pleasure of cheating, without any prospect of Gain.

"ELIZABETH."

"Bonham, n^r Newbury, Berks."

The Margravine's private theatricals excited quite a sensation at this period, and a taste in some fashionable coteries, for this kind of amusement.

On several of these occasions, Elliston was the very Coryphæus of the rout—particularly on one event, wherein there was an equal portion of the antic with the attic—and where there was certainly no deficiency of amusement, for the laugh which wit might have failed to excite, absurdity was pretty sure to elicit.

Sir John Carr, who had lately been knighted by the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, took a patronising lead in this instance, and appeared so highly gratified both with himself and everything connected with the evening, that Hook, who was present, declared the play could be performed but for one *knight* only.

"Ah! we shall never see such another," replied Sir John, *sans le savoir*.

On the 16th of March, Elliston signed articles of engagement with Mr. T. Sheridan, and other proprietors of Drury Lane theatre, for five years, at 28*l*. per week.

In the summer, Elliston being at Liverpool, he

received the following letter from his friend, Mr. Warner Phipps, which we insert, as experience has sufficiently proved the accuracy of his judgment, and the fulfilment of his anticipations: it respects the merits of Mr. Young:—

"My dear Elliston,—You know the perpetual state of occupation in which I live, and I need not, therefore, apologize for not writing to you earlier. You have now nine Albion shares—the last seven have cost 55*l.* each, transfer stamps included.

"Mr. Rundall paid for three of these . . .	£165
"And Mr. Jones for the remaining four . .	220
	£385

"I have lost no opportunity of seeing Mr. Young. It would be offensive to friendship, were I to pander to any vanity you may have, by underrating a man whom I look on, in one branch of his profession, to be a most formidable rival to you.

"In tragedy, Mr. Young has made a very strong, and I think, a well-deserved impression on the public mind. He has fairly won the favour he enjoys. His *Hamlet* contains beauties of a very high order, and his acting in the *Stranger* is powerfully, irresistibly impressive. As a tragic actor, he cannot but succeed; but in light comedy, it is as clear he must inevitably fail. His *Don Felix* is a very volume of failures—and his acting as much out of character, as an undertaker's scarf on a bridal attire.

"Nature has thrown such a solemnity about his form and aspect, that Thalia will neither yield to his entreaties nor be forced into his embraces—so much for the *stage*; but unless I am much mistaken, there is *still* a vein of fun running through his constitution, which to his friends at home, is rich and yielding. I do not doubt his *perceptions* of comedy—they may be as fine as of that branch in which he certainly excels; but he can never be a comedian.

"He has a good figure, but not an heroic form. His voice, by art, I apprehend, has become of the good quality we find it. He has a kind of chanting intonation, which, however it may first strike the ear, is soon grateful to it; I fancy it has been acquired in diligent attempts to overcome defect of articulation.

"Mr. Young frequently sheds over his text a brilliant lustre—there is a bold honesty in his manner which persuades he is right—you *believe* him in all he says and does. In tenderness he is deficient—he can vindicate female honour, but he cannot condole with the sufferer—he can championize the dignity of blood, but he cannot mingle tears with tears.

"Graham and Tom Sheridan have been watching him nightly, and I have no doubt the Drury Lane merchants are speculating on this new commodity. Sheridan saw him last night in *Hamlet*, and went behind the scenes at the conclusion of the play.

"The Haymarket has produced so good a specimen in yourself, that I am not surprised at the credit given to its young actors.*

"I went, two days ago, with Mr. Rundall, to look at the house he proposed for you in Stratford Place. The terms are certainly not high, but I hesitate in respect of the situation. You are the best judge whether so great a distance from the theatre would not be fatiguing and expensive to you, and whether your views also, with respect to Mrs. Elliston, would be promoted by a residence on this spot. I think there would be a discretion in your not taking the exact ground with families of rank and title. The very people who might become patrons of yourself and wife, would look coldly, disdainfully on you, as next-door neighbours.

"The great world may be pleased in being followed, but will not forgive being encroached on; in plain English, you have no business in Stratford Place: every house, I believe, in this street, is occupied by rank or wealth; and though no law forbids Mr. Elliston taking up his abode here, yet his good sense should prevent it.

"Remember Lord Erskine's advice on your Lincoln's-inn-fields project, and take that to be a pretty correct view of this similar proposition. As an actor and a gentleman, you are entitled to respect,

* Mr. Young's first appearance in London was at the Haymarket, June 22, 1807.

but as an aristocrat or a man of fashion, you would be laughed at. The Duke of St. Alban's, your next door neighbour, might gratify your vanity for a day, but if you have any feeling, he would be a thorn in your side for many.

"Garrick, with all his fame, sought and courted as he was, did not presume to place himself in immediate contact with nobility, though his fortune was equal to a handsome residence, which he, in fact, had in the Adelphi Terrace; and Kemble does not venture beyond the bourne of Bloomsbury.

I would suggest Bedford Place to you—the houses are spacious and convenient—admirably suited to Mrs. Elliston and her academy. "But for God's sake, do not let any duke overhear the fiddle of a dancing school, or your neighbour the countess, observe the actor stepping into a hackney-coach. The very principle of the ridiculous is in things being out of place.

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

Being at Liverpool, Elliston could scarcely have forgotten his two accommodating friends, the host

and hostess of the " Star." Such defection indeed would have been the basest ingratitude, for he had received on the last Christmas a " very *duck* of a *turkey*" (as his cook had expressed it) from this good easy pair, accompanied by a practical joke at the hands of the laughter-loving landlady, who had also enclosed him a black bottle, superscribed " Dantzic," which on being opened proved to be the translucent produce of the Liver—pool.

Elliston had arrived in this city at about the usual hour of the family dinner within the bar, and having deposited his luggage in the neigbourhood, presented himself suddenly, as the well remembered party were seated at table. The lady, who was operatively engaged on a broiled whiting at the very moment, no sooner had fixed her eyes on the apparition before her, than she uttered a piercing scream, when her terrified husband, unconscious of the real cause, and believing but in the possibility of one alone—namely, a fish-bone in the pharynx, jumped from his chair, and began to belabour the broad back of his helpless spouse, as though he were gratifying some other feeling than the mere desire of giving relief.

Two screams being, however, explained, (for with a woman a scream is the indiscriminate index of pain or pleasure, as " No" is sometimes preferred to express assent,) Elliston was received with raptures by his hostess, to which he was made welcome by

Tow-wouse himself, with the same sense of hospitality, as to the first cut of the shoulder of mutton.

But certain impressions had now seized our hero, which had the effect of taking away his appetite without satisfying his hunger.

Time works in various ways. The Lady, who four years since, as our readers may remember, had "promised to be fat," was now discovered no *less* than her word; she had, in fact, increased (or as we believe the term is, "spread") to a most unsymmetrical extent, so that she who had hitherto been only her good man's *better* half, was now become in the predial sense, a positive "prize."

Elliston, however, had far too much generosity to betray his *peine d'esprit*, but, like an experienced actor, "played the agreeable" so well, that nothing was wanting to gratify the vanity of his fair companion, which in point of fact had kept excellent pace with the rapid increase of her person. Nay, it is a doubt whether she were not more gratified than in past days; for, fearing he might be guilty of coldness, Elliston, in all probability, a little overacted his part, illustrating that scene of Fielding, (or if not Fielding, so very like him,) in which a certain lady observes—

"Your love, I fear, is not sincere;" to which replies her suitor,—

"Ah, Madam! if you did but know how incomparably the imitation surpasses the reality, you

would never desire the insipidity of a true lover again."

The " Star" *menage* was much as usual. *Tow-wouse*, who was a landlord far more addicted to the chalk than the sponge, soon moved off towards the " Tap," having first placed two tumblers, the spirit-stand, and a kettle of boiling water, at the disposal of this " comfortable" mistress and her visitor.

Elliston having expressed his thanks over and over again, for the Christmas turkey, and laughed as frequently at the bottle of transparent " Dantzic," felt he could really return no longer to that subject, and now looked about for some fresh matter of *belle parolle*, for which at other times he would have needed no prompting. The liquor was certainly a good refuge, which, each moment he sipped, suggested some lively sally. The hit at backgammon was not forgotten—again was he at the cheerful *board*, when the lady suddenly exclaiming, " The stakes as usual!" he was seized with that sort of sensation which is generally produced by a hard crust, or perhaps a pebble, coming in contact with an angry tooth.

If once he had played for kisses, he fain now would have played for " love"—he was at least determined to play like a man of honour. To it they went, rattled were the dice, repeated was the sly equivoque, and though his arm could describe but a sorry segment of Juno's zone, yet he pressed

the apron-strings of his fair antagonist, and paid his debts in the old coin, though, Heaven help him, with the same good-will he would have satisfied damages in the Sheriff's Court!

There was, however, no coquetting with the "Dantzic"—all there was pure devotion; and when, on mingling the third rummer, our animated guest apostrophized the bottle, "Shrunk to this little measure!" his eye twinkled again in its own peculiar humour, as it fell on the expansive equator which girded the merry planet at his side.

But by degrees this *garconnerie* underwent considerable condensation—a certain offuscation crept over the imagination of our hero, and his spherical friend having fallen into a comfortable doze, Elliston, who was ever grand and sententious when under the Thyrsus of "the god," rose from his chair, and summoning the landlord into the room, commenced, in a true Areopagite style, to read him so tremendous a lecture on the duties of hospitality, that, long before he had finished, poor *Tow-wouse* was perfectly convinced, Elliston had been the most misused guest that had ever entered his house.

Fain would we drop a curtain on the shame of our hero—a shame to which only chanticleer recalled him, when he opened his half-sobered eyes eight hours afterwards, in a back parlour, overlooking the stable-yard of the "Star" at Liverpool.

Elliston's theatrical reception at Liverpool was

flattering, and he played his round of characters in far better spirit than might have been expected, on those boards, which he had so recently desired to tread as proprietor. But Elliston's was not a temper to be affected with *malaise;* on the contrary, discomfited in one project, he was only hurried on to another, and defeat to him was the very assay of his energies.

Having concluded his short engagement at this city, he made a sort of *détour* on his return to London, taking Buxton in his circuit, at which place he acted for a few nights.

The theatre here, was one of those wretched little buildings, resembling nearly the " Globe" of Jonson's day, " open to the sky,"—wherein the modern idler has too frequently been found to cull his own pastime from the misery of others, and glorify his self-esteem by the greater humility he witnesses. Sport is it to him which is death to them; and irresistibly ridiculous as are sometimes the hard shifts of the poor players, he should remember that the price of his momentary laugh, may be a pang by no means as fleeting from the hearts of others; and the hollow pleasure he has reaped to-day, had been sown in the long privations of those, whose claims on Providence were perhaps equal to his own.

The spirit of the ridiculous, however, is a moral combustible, which, like gunpowder, will force the seals of its prison; and so long as the splinters

wound not, we must be content that it explode. Of its component parts, there are no richer beds than country theatricals, though we presume not to offer the following by any means as an extraordinary example.

Miserable was the theatre, and the actors "*Iro pauperiores.*" The capabilities of the former, consisted of two scenes, which, like *Master Solomon's* waistcoat, had been turned for many occasions, and from their state of near obliteration had arrived at such a point of utility as to pass for anything. This will remind us of the Welsh sheriff, (of whom the facetious Tom Brown speaks,) who converted an old cloak, first into a coat, then into a waistcoat, and lastly into a pair of small clothes.

A few stage "foot-lamps" illumed the whole house, throwing a dim *ir*religious light upon the fresco brick wall, which supported both the roof of the building and the back of the spectator. The pit floor was composed of a line of hurdles, which kept the feet of the groundlings at some distance from that only overflow which good fortune ever permitted, but which, owing to the low position of the building, never failed in the rainy season. The scant wardrobe, to the last thread and button, was, it is true, employed in every piece, but which, being a contribution of all costumes under the sun, was at least, in some character, (like the child's sham watch), right once during the evening.

The company was numerically small, unless the numericals had reference to their sum of years, for, with the exception of two urchins, who had but one hat between them, there was not an actor or actress much under seventy years of age.

The entertainment on the night of Elliston's arrival at Buxton was the " Castle Spectre."

In the course of this play, it will be recollected, *Earl Percy* is detained prisoner in *Lord Osmond's* tower, whose movements are overwatched by *Muley* and *Saib*, two of *Osmond's* black slaves. Whilst these Africans are playing at dice in front of the stage, and the *Earl* feigning sleep on his couch, fishermen without the walls of the castle sing a chorus, which gives the *Earl* a cue for his escape; this he accomplishes by climbing a window, unseen by the blacks, and dropping into the boat, supposed to be floating under the casement. On this night, however, the said scene was thus acted, or rather, the progress of it thus inauspiciously interrupted.

In the first place, the two slaves were represented by one actor—" doubled," as it is called, (two and double, however, are much the same thing,) and the dialogue he carried on with himself, supposing the presence of the second person—

" Hark ! music ! "—here the first strain of the distant chorus is understood, but as there was not one in the company who could express a note but

himself, the actor turned his head over his shoulders and slyly chanted it, *Percy* still feigning sleep. The black continues—

" I'll see what it is!"—he now, by means of a table, ascended to the casement, and thrusting his head and shoulders through the same, a fiddle from behind was handed up to him, on which, out of sight of the audience, he worked his elbows, singing and playing—

> " Sleep you or wake you, lady bright,
> Sing Megen oh! oh! Megen Ee!"

Concealing, then, his instrument, and withdrawing his head, he turned to the audience—

" Surely I know that voice. Still my prisoner sleeps. I'll listen again."

Once again, head and shoulders through the window, the fiddle raised to his hands, on he went—

> " To spring below then never dread,
> Our arms to catch you shall be spread;
> A boat now waits to set you free,
> Sing Megen oh! oh! Megen Ee!"

But, alas! just at this moment, when in act of a second time pulling in his body from the narrow aperture, the exertion necessary to the operation, together with the fragile state of the antique scenery, produced a most awful crash—the whole side of *Osmond's* castle wall, with *Muley* sticking in the window-frame, like a rat caught by his neck, fell

inwards on the stage, disclosing at one view an heterogeneous state of things beyond, beggaring all powers of description.

Hogarth's "Strollers Dressing in a Barn," is not more fantastically conceived—pipkins and helmets, wigs and smallclothes, paint and petticoats, bread and cheese, and thunder and lightning—ladies and gentlemen, full dressed, half dressed, undressed, in all the various stages of hurried interchange of joint-stock attire—love and discord, fondling and fighting—chalk, tallow, poison, Cupids, and brick-bats—hips, beards, bosoms, bottles, glue-pots, and broken-headed drums—garlands, gallipots, ghosts, moonbeams, play-books, and brimstone! "It was an Art-Union" which no recent days have been able to parallel; but the consternation was that of an earthquake! As to the "double" black, still in his state of pillory, and who yet lay sprawling on the stage, we might indeed repeat—

> "Now fear, his hand its skill to try,
> Amid the chords bewilder'd laid,
> And back recoil'd, he knew not why,
> E'en at the sound himself had made."

But such is the horizon in which the London "stars" are occasionally to be witnessed, and theatrical astronomers will calculate their return, with Newtonian accuracy, to the same quarter.

On the night following the above disaster, Elliston

played at the same theatre his favourite *Aranza*. Extraordinary efforts were of course made to render the play worthy the patronage expected—in fact, a honeymoon had become a rare phenomenon in the place, and favours were not wanting on the present occasion.

The house had an overflow, though a dry night; and matters went for a time swimmingly, as it is called—there was neither break down in scenery nor acting. *Juliana* (in the costume of *Fatima!*) was, it is true, as imperfect in her part as person; yet, had she retained the very words of her author, she would scarcely have been more distinct, for she had lost every tooth in her head, which rendered articulation so obscure, that default of precise words was of little detriment to the scene, so long as she filled up a stated time and shewed a spirit.

All went on amazingly well, until the scene with the *Mock Duke*, in the fourth act. Here *Jaques* is discovered sitting in a large arm-chair, which, to give it dignity, had been covered over with an old curtain hanging. On rising from his seat, the hilt of the *Mock Duke's* sword, most inopportunely was entangled in one of the sundry holes of the loose coverlid, which, on the actor's walking towards the front of the stage,

"Like a wounded snake, dragg'd its slow length along."

This certainly provoked something more than a

smile; but it so happened, that the chair in question, had been borrowed for the occasion, from a neighbouring inn, and being originally fashioned for the incidental purposes of a sick chamber, its available conversion, was so palpably disclosed to the whole body of spectators, that the roar produced was far more resembling thunder than any paltry imitation ever before witnessed in a theatre. The people absolutely screamed with merriment—in fact, they laughed for a whole week afterwards.

Of the acting company at Buxton, the greater part, as we have observed, though low in gold, were at least rich in those "silver hairs which purchase good opinion;" and amongst them, a Mr. Ladbroke, who had fallen into the infirmity, not altogether through years, of forgetting the words of parts he was constantly in the habit of playing.

Of this, there are many instances on record. When Tom Walker was performing *Macheath* for the seventieth time, he was a little imperfect, which Rich observing, said,—

"Hallo! Mister! your memory ought to be pretty good by this time!"

"And so it is," replied Walker, "but zounds, it cannot last for ever!"

Mr. Ladbroke, however, was generally perfect at rehearsals, but his mystifications at night arose probably from this cause—his *rôle* was always the

old men: and these, whether *Sir A. Absolute*, *Don Lopez*, *Foresight*, or *Adam Winterton*, he acted in the same suit of clothes, so that when he gazed on his own figure, ready dressed for any particular one of these, all Bell's Edition crowded to the threshold of his memory, which not unnaturally led to some confusion in the interior. Thus, for instance, would he proceed, on making his bow as *Sir Peter Teazle*.

"When an old bachelor marries a young wife . . . Ah! you pretty rogue, you shall outshine the queen's box on an opera night . . . His Pagod, his Poluphlosboio, his Monsieur Musphonos, and his devil knows what . . . It was but yesterday he fastened my wig to the back of my chair, and when I went to make a bow, I popped my bald head in *Mrs. Frizzle's* face—" so that here we had a compound of *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Sir Francis Gripe*, *Periwinkle*, and *Old Hardcastle;* all delightful when taken "neat," but as little relished in the admixture, as old Burgundy, whisky punch, dry sherry, and Staffordshire ale, in aliquot parts, for an afternoon's draught.

On his third night, Elliston played *Archer* in the "Beaux Stratagem;"* a stratagem we doubt not, far

* Farquhar was not only a dramatist of great wit, but a companion of infinite humour. Wilks relates, that when Farquhar was in Trinity College, Dublin, he sent to a friend to borrow Burnet's "History of the Reformation," but his friend replied

inferior to that by which the comedy was got over. He concluded with "*Tag*"—the *rag* and *bobtail* were ready to answer for themselves.

During this short sojourn, Elliston made a visit to the celebrated Poole's Cavern. Here he fell in with an elderly gentleman and his two daughters, one a little *riante* Bacchante, and the other of a graver cast, bearing about the same character to each other, as a Novel to a Romance.

Elliston made himself at once agreeable. Being in excellent spirits, he exerted his inventive powers in telling historical facts; narrating a whole volume of legendary exploits of the daring outlaw, (Poole,) which threw into the shade all the "Gesta Romanorum" and monkish superstitions ever recorded.

"That," said he, addressing the younger of the *Minerva Press*, and at the same time pointing to one of the many fantastic forms of lime-stone within the cavern—"that is the petrifaction of the renowned 'Lady of the Land,' who remained a dragoness because no one had the hardihood to kiss her lips and disenchant her." But not even here had Nature anything so sublime as himself—

he never lent any book out of his chamber, but if he would come there, he might make use of it as long as he pleased. Some time after, the owner of the book sent to borrow Farquhar's bellows—the dramatist returned as answer, he never lent his bellows out of his chamber, but if his neighbour would please to come there, he might make use of them as long as he pleased.

a point on which he employed all the sugar and nutmeg of his eloquence. The same lady venturing, some time afterwards, to ask him to whom they were obliged, and laughingly to demand what he was—

"To tell the plain truth, madam," replied our hero, "I am a usurer. I lay out my happiness to exorbitant interest, for, in contributing to your pleasure, which I flatter myself I do, I receive at least one hundred per cent. !"

Things went trippingly on in this manner for some time, when deliberately, and with no small exhibition of humour, the old gentleman, with a countenance vitreous and polished as the surrounding spa, drew from his pocket a Buxton play-bill, and exultingly pointing to the same, cried out,—

"Ha ! ha ! here we have you again to-night—but we cannot see too much of you, *Elliston !*"—a *plaisanterie*, at which our actor himself had the good sense to laugh immoderately.

Elliston had driven over to Poole's Cavern with a friend, in a gig, and in the course of his extended jaunt, was strolling on foot leisurely up one of the hills, (his companion having the reins of the horse,) when a figure approached him from the hedge-side, the most wretched, the most emaciated of beings he had ever beheld.

The man was evidently dying of hunger and exhaustion. The object which presented himself

was a poor Frenchman, who, having escaped from one of the prisons, had wandered about a country of which he knew nothing, for four days and nights, with no money, no means of assuaging the cravings of nature, but rather avoiding every one, notwithstanding his destitution, from the dread that the succour he might seek would presently be converted, into severer penalties than he had yet experienced.

Commiserating the poor creature as he did, Elliston knew not how to proceed, or into what serious dilemma he might bring himself, by sheltering an escaped prisoner of war. He at least determined not to abuse the rights of confidence—in other words, to maintain strictly the rules of dramatic justice, and entitle himself to the applause of his own conscience.

Desiring the poor Frenchman to lie snug in the field from which he had just crawled, (like the great Monmouth, with a few peas only in his pocket,) Elliston and his friend drove back to a neighbouring village, where purchasing a couple of loaves, a little bacon, and a bottle of wine, he returned to the spot where the famishing foreigner lay concealed.

The wretched creature (who, in his days of plumage, would scarcely have been a match for "*Captain Weazel,*") having long since given himself up for lost, now began to blubber in tears of gratitude, and express his *battements du cœur* in as much pantomime as his weakness would permit.

The evening was fast closing in, but the weather warm and lovely, and Elliston, teeming with melodramatic fervour, hurried the trembling refugee to a low copse below the brow of a contiguous dell, and boxing him snugly in a heap of furze, completely obscured from the public eye, spread before him the restoratives he had just obtained.

The little Frenchman's head peeping from his prickly nest—the bread and bacon—the bottle of "neat wine," and the true stage importance in which, no doubt, Elliston had fully invested himself, must have represented a most characteristic picture. Elliston, of course, delivered a speech or two, more apposite to the occasion than intelligible to his listener; and dropping, at the same time, a small sum of money into the lap of the nidulated man of war, commended him to the caprice of Fortune, who sometimes, when in a pleasant mood, exerts herself in extraordinary means, for the benefit of the most insignificant of her votaries.

CHAPTER XIII.

Elliston's meditations in Dove Dale—Arrives at an inn—Hob and knob with the landlord—A terrible adventure—Increasing horror—Our hero in great disgrace—His neighbour's wife—Mr. Thomas Hill—Miss Pope retires from the stage—A letter of Mrs. Clive—A royal command—Miss Pope's terror at playing *Mrs. Heidelberg* before the king — Her letter to Lord Harcourt—Mrs. Jordan—Elliston's letter to his wife—Glasgow—Elliston's adventure with a Scotch gentleman—Strollers—Anecdotes respecting them.

HAVING still considerable leisure at his disposal, Elliston felt no inclination for an immediate return to London. The weather continued unusually fine, and autumn had descended on the romantic district of Derbyshire in that fulness of grace, which equally distinguishes this season of the year, by the richness of aspect as by the abundance of its bounty.

It was just at this time, also, that Elliston had received a letter from his wife, written in that truly affectionate and sensible tone, which the present moment was so well calculated to assist, in the generosity of its purpose. Full of affection, but not

unmixed by well-directed reproof, Elliston read over sundry times its unanswerable contents, till a temper of sentimentality crept over him, not unusual to such constitutions as his, which they who are subject to them, would be fain persuaded are of a very intrinsic nature.

A pseudonymous self-examination took possession of him; and as he wandered this morning along the declivous paths of Dove Dale, he pondered awhile on the home-truths that had just been presented to him; and having arraigned some of those infirmities, to which we have had occasion frequently to allude, with the impartiality of Rousseau himself, and rhapsodized aloud to no inconsiderable effect, he came to the conclusion that he was about one of the most worthless fellows in his Majesty's dominions.

Having done so much—he considered that he had done quite enough. Confession is certainly one half of amendment; and as this half he had so liberally satisfied, the remaining took no part at all in this act of sentiment, but, like a man who had compounded with his creditors, he opened a fresh ledger and felt himself at once at liberty to run in debt, at the first convenient opportunity.

Elliston arrived on the following day at Derby; and the odour of yesterday being still powerful upon him, he avoided what is called the head inn; and after a short reconnoitre, entered a smaller

house of entertainment on the verge of the town, where he determined to take up his quarters for the night. Here he soon ingratiated himself with his landlord—a habit he delighted to indulge in; and having despatched a hasty repast, invited his new-found friend to partake the bottle which had been just set before him.

The said landlord was nearly as bulky as the tun of Heidelberg; and as it would require consequently about as much to fill him, Elliston conceived he might have made too unremunerating an engagement; but as this personage was really a merry fellow, and a bit of a wag, Elliston did not despair of his own capacity, at least, in a bibulous acceptation.

He soon discovered, however, the poor man had more wives than he knew what to do with; for although, not to perplex the reader, he had but one, yet was she one too many, so that the present moment was in fact, the first he had had for many a day, for the manifestation of that thorough good humour so natural to him.

Though in the presence of his landlord, Elliston soon found he had calculated without his host; for the good man's volubility was of that extent, that he fairly chattered our hero dumb, who had as much chance with him in the race, as sound with light. But as our traveller could not consent entirely to renounce the hero, he at least took the lead in the

bottle—a part which his landlord, for many reasons, was not displeased in resigning to him, for the liquor, though passing under the denomination noticed at the door, "Neat Wines," was, in fact, a compound greatly in circulation at this period of the war—namely, a composition of gin, treacle, blacking, and tobacco, or, in politer words, "old crusted port."

On producing a second and even a third bottle of this delectable electuary, the landlord was not unnaturally beguiled into the joint praise of the qualities of his cordial and the judgment of his guest; declaring that the squire on the hill never drank any other when he met the judges of assize, and exultingly displaying not only the bee's-wing, but the very bees themselves, who, in community with sundry smaller flies, had been carefully corked in at the bottling of this remarkable vintage.

But society will sweeten the coarsest fare; and as our traveller was, in truth, greatly diverted with his new acquaintance, the sitting was still prolonged, when the shrill notes of the landlady suddenly recalled her husband to fresh duties, in the arrival of other customers at the "Red Cow."

Tom Brown says, the best argument for sobriety, is bad wine; but left to himself and the greater part of the third bottle of the *old crusted port*, Elliston took refuge in his sentimentality of yesterday; and drawing his wife's letter from his pocket,

moistened sentence after sentence with the remaining bumpers, so that, at length, heart, head, and stomach being in one common state of insurrection, he retired—widely from his custom—to an early bed.

And now, spirit of time-honoured Radcliffe—shade of "wonder-working Lewis," descend upon our humble efforts in the "new scenes and changes" of our homely history, which we fear must else be most unworthily recorded.

A deep sleep was the immediate consequence of the "drugged posset" so liberally indulged in by our graceless wanderer, when, about the chime of midnight, as nearly as he could guess, he was awakened by a sharp click at the lock of his apartment, followed immediately by a long-drawn creak of hinge, which left but little doubt in respect of some intruder.

The moon was shining fully on the casement, which was directly opposite the foot of his bed; but a large folding screen had been placed nearly midway of the room, for the purpose, no doubt, of obscuring the morning sun, for the apartment was entirely destitute of hangings; and between this screen and the window was the door. The creaking from behind was presently repeated, at those abrupt intervals, denoting the stealthy action of approach. Elliston listened—sleep had sobered him, and some little fear, perhaps, added quickness to his faculties.

He listened, and distinctly heard the whispering of two persons, whose shadow the moon's fulness threw strongly on the side wall. Still in breathless attention, Elliston remained motionless; the whispering was resumed, and he now caught the very words which were passing.

"Afraid! What folly! He's asleep, I tell you; go—go!"

"I cannot!" was the reply.

Elliston felt convinced the second voice was that of a woman, and being at once impressed their object was no less than to cut his throat, (for no one contemplates simple robbery in the dead of night, without this *adagio* accompaniment,) he was hesitating whether his pacific course were the wisest he could pursue, when again he heard—

"He sleeps! I tell you again, he sleeps! Why, he drank two bottles, they say. Come—come, 'tis soon done!"

"Oh, I cannot!" again responded the female; "I should die if he were to awake."

"And I shall die, whether or no," sighed the terrified comedian.

"Come—come!" still urged the man from behind; "why, he snores—hark!" at which moment, Elliston raised his eyes from the bed-clothes, and saw clearly the figures of the speakers. They were in the instantaneous act of stepping forward, when, by an involuntary impulse, Elliston sprang from

his bed, and rushing to the spot, clasped, with a mingled shout of terror and triumph, the waist of the advancing female, who, uttering a shriek which might have awakened the occupiers of a cemetery, fell on her knees before him.

The clattering *bouleversement* thus suddenly produced (for other articles had been overthrown besides the lady), and the clamour of the parties engaged, at once raised the whole establishment of the "Red Cow."

Elliston, with no other attire, than that which usage has deemed sufficient to the tenant of a pair of sheets, was still holding in convulsive exultation, his fainting victim, when the fat landlord, who, by the size of his stomach, might be said to carry all before him, scarcely in a producible state, ("with his rib by his side," whose voluminous nightcap almost buried her vixen visage,) tumbled into the apartment.

Here let the *contretemps* be elucidated—here let that strong circumstantial evidence be disentangled, by which, in the absence of proof positive, it is set down that we may legally convict innocent parties of most abominable offences.

The event which had so inopportunely broken up the *tête-à-tête* of Elliston and his landlord over their crusted port, on the previous afternoon, was the arrival of a commercial traveller and his lady, whose purpose it was to remain that night at the inn.

These new guests, who had been previously apprised of their dormitory, having well supped, at the hour of midnight, were about to retire. Unfortunately, however, the room occupied by Elliston, was one through which it was necessary to proceed, before reaching the other in question, and he having retired, as we have already noticed, at an early hour, was consequently at this time in bed.

The unforeseen dismay which now assailed the commercial gentleman's good lady, whose nerves at all times were subject to great excitation, at passing through an apartment in which there was a man positively abed, had given rise to the whole of this common-law evidence of criminal intent, which could leave no doubt on the minds of any highly respectable jury, and which had so unwittingly exposed our hero in a situation in which we blush ever to have discovered him.

But having now hurried him back again to his disordered couch, in which we trust he will bury his shameless countenance from the light of day, and carried the half expiring lady in safety to the inner sanctuary, we will drop the curtain on the scene altogether; in the hope that either shame will induce him for ever after to avoid her sight, or that he will prepare himself, by the crowing of the cock, with one of those fine speeches, by which he has ever been so distinguished, in making the *amende honorable.*

Scarcely had Elliston resumed his duties at Drury Lane, when he involved himself in a war of words with the proprietors of his ancient ally, "The Mirror," but more particularly with all the world's acquaintance, the late *Tom Hill.*

"The Mirror" (if we may be pardoned a common-place joke) had presumed to cast reflections on Elliston's tragedy, which the self-esteem of the aggrieved party, of course, set down as *scandalum magnatum.* In fact, this journal had travelled a little out of the direct path of criticism, by indulging in a few tart personalities affecting the actor. As Dryden's criticism, it was no longer "the majesty of a queen, but as Rymer's, the ferocity of a tyrant."*

Among other things, it had stated, that Elliston had of late acquired a habit of stretching his mouth from ear to ear, resembling one of those Dutch toys, denominated nut-crackers, and it had also gone so far, as to question our hero's terms of intimacy with the Latin tongue, by the imputation of a false quantity in the word "marital," &c. &c. In respect of the former, all the nuts, of course, fell to the share of the public, who mightily enjoyed the absurd sensitiveness of the man who could "quarrel with

* An expression of Malone.

[Albina Jane Martyn Elliston, born 10th of March, 1808, in Stratford Place: godmothers, Albina Countess of Buckinghamshire and Lady Jane Aston.]

another for cracking nuts only because he himself had hazel eyes"—and in respect of the latter, the "marital" *quantity*, the actor might have been content to take his correction, in good part, from the critics, as in the marital *quality*, he had lately been so signally chastened by his exemplary wife.

We will not here trouble our readers with any part of the epistolary matter on either side—suffice it to say, as may well be imagined, the player got the worst of it, by the simple fact of being laughed at for his pains; whilst he afforded the literary loomsman, Thomas Hill, a stock of the raw tattle material, which, with an industry so peculiar to him, he manufactured into a very marketable commodity, and was moreover himself raised, for the first time, on the pedestal of a hero.*

On the 26th of May (1808), the admired Miss Pope made her farewell curtsey on Drury Lane stage, after a service of fifty-two years, during

* Mr. Thomas Hill was born at Lancaster on the 2nd of May, 1760, and died, at his chambers in the Adelphi, on the 20th of December, 1840. As several biographical notices of this gentleman have so lately appeared in the public prints, it will be unnecessary to append any in this place. The uncertainty as to the period of his birth, and his still "immortal youth" had been a long hackneyed joke amongst his immediate friends, so that, like the bard of England, he might be said to have been "not of an age, but for all time."

which, with the single interruption of the season 1775, owing to some difference with Garrick, she had never acted at any other theatre. For her final benefit she selected the part of my *Lady Duberly*, in Colman's comedy of "The Heir at Law;" the receipts of the house being 482*l.*

In 1756, Garrick produced a piece entitled "Lilliput," which was acted by children, with the exception, certainly, of *Gulliver* himself, which was performed by the full-grown Mr. Bransby, a gentleman whose athletic form was well calculated to produce a striking contrast to the inhabitants of "*Mildendo.*"

Mr. Pope, the father of our heroine, who kept a hair-dresser's shop, adjoining the "Ben Jonson's Head," in Little Russell Street, was barber in ordinary to the theatre;—he had introduced his daughter Jane, then twelve years of age, to the notice of Mr. Garrick, who was so pleased by the few specimens she gave of dramatic ability, that he immediately assigned to the little demoiselle the part of *Lady Flimnap*, and, moreover, entrusted her with a sparkling epilogue written for the occasion.

Three years after, when only fifteen, Miss Pope was announced for *Corinna*, in "The Confederacy," as "a young gentlewoman, her first appearance." Her reception was highly encouraging, and her acting well nigh merited that abundant applause, which the generosity of the public so liberally be-

stowed. She had very early attracted the attention of that celebrated actress, Mrs. Clive, whose friendship and regard speedily followed, and with whom she lived on the most intimate terms until that lady's death, which took place in 1785.*

On the morning after our debutante's appearance in the part of *Corinna*, she received the following from her esteemed companion and adviser :—

"My dear young Friend,—I saw you last night. You acted with great and deserved approbation ; but should you to-morrow night exceed your first endeavour, be not disappointed should you meet with less encouragement. Remember, all, last night, were friends ready-made—to-morrow, you are to commence forming new ones amongst strangers, who, though I sincerely hope will ultimately become as warm as those from whom you have just parted, yet they will see you and approve you, before they offer you a direct testimony of their favour.

"Be not disheartened, for I should regret that such merits as yours were not put to the test at

* Miss Pope was executrix and residuary legatee under the will of Mrs. Clive, Mr. Raftor (Mrs. Clive's brother) having a life interest in the property. Mrs. Clive passed her latter days at Little Strawberry Hill, near the villa of Horace Walpole.

Cibber wrote his comedy of the "Refusal," at Strawberry Hill, then a small place, which he hired of Lord Bradford's coachman.

once; but be not disheartened, nor fancy the comparative coldness with which you will be met, proceeds from ill-will, but that it is rather attention to your acting, with the view of testifying the truth of all that your friends have said of you. Many a young actor has been destroyed by this precise ordeal, because, having previously ran away with the idea that their friends alone had any judgment in the matter, have fancied the reception they had subsequently met with from strangers, had been the effect of malice and ill-nature.

"With this caution, I trust that in a month you will be safely landed on the shores of public favour —I am sure if you do justice to your merits, you will, and this act of justice is near at hand. My little assistance shall not be wanting in any way which may be serviceable to you; and I shall contrive to be at Drury Lane when you repeat the character.

"Believe me, my dear young friend, I wish you every success, and a long life to enjoy it. I am too old to be jealous of you, therefore may be trusted were I liable to such frailty; but I am not without vanity, and it is the vanity of an ardent desire that all I have foretold of you may come to pass.

"God bless you, my dear child."

Success and well-earned applause were the result of Miss Pope's second appearance. Mrs. Clive seemed rendered happy for the remainder of her days, a great part of which, it may be well imagined, was devoted to the instruction of the youthful actress, who repaid her with that gratitude of heart, which we will not invidiously say is no current coin in the trade of an actor, but is in rare circulation under any denomination of society.

Miss Pope, as it is well known, became ultimately all that her friend had predicted—a most accomplished artist. In the latter part of her career, she had been importuned by her managers to play *Mrs. Heidelberg*, a part which she had never studied in her earlier days, and felt now totally unequal to attempt.

It happened that at this time (1802), Lord Harcourt, who had always been amongst the foremost of Miss Pope's admirers, despatched to her the following note :—

"Lord Harcourt has just received the king's command to notify to Miss Pope, that his Majesty has directed the 'Clandestine Marriage' for Thursday next ; and has also, by his Majesty's order, informed Mr. Kemble that it is his pleasure, Miss Pope should play the character of *Mrs. Heidelberg* on that occasion."

This was enclosed in the following from his lordship.

"MADAM,—To a woman of your discernment, the contents of the enclosed note will be highly flattering, though, at the same time, possibly embarrassing.

"The case is this. Last night, at the Queen's house, where your theatrical talents are frequently mentioned, a wish was expressed that you should play *Mrs. Heidelberg* before their Majesties on Thursday next; to which I observed to the king, that however honoured and happy you must ever be in obeying his Majesty's pleasure, yet I believed that you had never yet studied the part, and doubted the possibility of your being ready in it by the time. The king seemed to assent; but I have just now received a letter from the Princess Elizabeth, in which her R. H. says,—

"'I have received the king's command to inform you, that if you can contrive that Miss Pope shall play *Mrs. Heidelberg* on Thursday, he would be delighted; and Lord Harcourt may tell her from me, observed the king, that she is the only person who *can* act it, since we have lost Mrs. Clive.'

"HARCOURT."

To which communication Miss Pope replies:—

"MY LORD,—You well know my grateful sentiments in respect of their Majesties. No subject has ever loved and honoured them more than myself; and this, alas! in my declining day, is the

only instance in which I have been unable to the great delight of obeying them. The undertaking would be a tragedy, and not a comedy, for, believe me, I should die in the attempt—my dear lord, it would kill me. My powers are scarcely equal to it for any time; but for Thursday! I tremble at the very contemplation of it.

"The managers have frequently of late urged me to this, with time for study; but I have taken it into my poor head, that the critics would be soured against me, and I might lose the little fame I have obtained—perhaps, in some measure, the good opinion of their Majesties. I tremble again at what I have written—I know I should not have said so much—my duty tells me, I should not; but should their Majesties graciously be pleased to see me play the part at any other time, I will make instant preparation to obey them.

"My memory, to say nothing of my other humble qualities, is not so lively as when I was eighteen; and, my lord, I am an old woman now. If his Majesty would make me a peeress, I could not do it. Oh! my dear, dear lord, send me a pardon under the great seal, or I shall never leave home again.

"I have the honour to be, your lordship's most humble servant,

On the 6th of May (1802) the effort was made, and Miss Pope played the part before their Majesties. She succeeded to the undivided opinion of the whole house—" never had the character been acted with better effects," said one of the journals of the day, "not even by the regretted Mrs. Clive."*

Lord Harcourt called, the following morning, on Miss Pope, to congratulate her on having so highly delighted the king, observing he had never seen his Majesty in better spirits. "Knew she could do it —knew she could do it," repeated the monarch frequently, during the representation of the comedy.

King, the original *Lord Ogleby*, quitted the stage on the 24th of the same month, and the "Clandestine Marriage" remained on the shelf for a considerable time from this period.

The suggestions of Mr. Phipps in respect of Elliston's new abode, appear to have had but little weight with him, for he had now entered on the house in Stratford-place, which he fitted up not extrava-

* Anthony Pasquin says truly, though not in very elevated verse:—

"When Pleasure and Ease had seduced to their arms
Convivial Clive, and the stage lost her charms,
The jest-loving muse was alarmed at the story,
And, fearing a rapid decline of her glory,
Deputed *Jane Pope*, as successor of *Clive*,
To keep sunny laughter and fancy alive."

gantly, for, in fact, it never was thoroughly furnished; but the vanity of the comedian was thus far flattered, in calling so spacious a residence his own, and placing Mrs. Elliston in a position, which he still pertinaciously believed, would advance her professional interest with the fashionable world.

These advantages, if such they might be called, fell fortunately to the share of a woman of correct feeling and due discrimination; and though it still remained a question whether Stratford-place were the fittest spot for the object of a dancing academy, yet the deportment and conduct of Mrs. Elliston acquired to her new friends, whilst no one could be more secure than herself in retaining those she had already numbered.

Elliston's benefit in this season was a very brilliant occasion. He had chosen "Much Ado About Nothing," with the popular afterpiece "Tekeli."

On this night he was more than usually happy in the part of *Benedict*, and Mrs. Jordan equally excelled herself in *Beatrice*. They each acted in their best style, and scarcely ever had an audience been more delighted—so much rank and fashion had rarely before attended a benefit. Mrs. Jordan was complimented by an elegant ode, which appeared two days afterwards in the *Morning Post*.

At the close of the Drury Lane season, Elliston proceeded on an engagement to Dublin, where he

found his attraction by no means equal to his expectations. In a letter to his wife, he says,—

"I was tossed about for twenty-six hours. On leaving the coach at Shrewsbury, being anxious immediately to proceed, I ordered a chaise, but was told they had no horses at the first post-house—at the second and third, I received similar answers. I was greatly distressed, for it was a point with me to reach Oswestry without delay.

"You will be amused at my expedient. Summoning a diplomatic look into my countenance, I demanded instantly to be conducted to the mayor, declaring that I had despatches for the Duke of Richmond, and that if horses were not immediately supplied, the affair would come at once under the consideration of the secretary of state.

"'Shew me to the mayor!' said I.

"'He is in bed, sir,' was the reply—'seriously ill.'

"'Then I shall be sure to find him at home—my business is as much of life and death as his own. Shew me to the mayor, or supply the horses.'

"My manner and words had the desired effect—horses were provided, and within twenty minutes, I was off again.

"I have one assurance to give you, at which I know you will be pleased. Since leaving London, I have led, in all respects, a most correct life—had you been at my elbow, I could not have behaved better

—but I am now and then sadly hipped, and am not ashamed to confess, a little 'home sick.'"

Elliston's next letter was from Edinburgh.

"Last Monday," says he, "I played at Liverpool, *Panglos* and *Don Juan;* Tuesday, the *Venetian Outlaw* and the *Singles;* Wednesday, *Leon,* with 'Of Age To-morrow;' Thursday, at Preston, the *Singles* and *Silvester Daggerwood.* I then travelled two hundred miles, and acted on Saturday, in Edinburgh, *Octavian,* with 'Of Age To-morrow.' I have here made ample amends for my failure at Dublin (for I can call it no less)—my reception was quite an hurrah!

"I have already remitted 610*l.* to my bankers, and have still this place, Glasgow and Manchester, to pillage. But who can tell how long this tide of popularity will last—this *aura popularis*—whether tide or gale, mutation is the nature of both.

"If God preserve my life, and give me fortitude to pursue the purpose of my hopes, our happiest days are yet to come, though I myself may pass into comparative obscurity. My present exertions shall sow the seed of future fortune, under whose ample boughs you shall some day recline. Believe me I feel at greater distance from home than four hundred miles, when I think of you and my family.

"I do not pretend to give you any description of this romantic city—it would far exceed my limits; but I must not omit mentioning that I have been

introduced to some of the Scotch professors, who have distinguished me by great kindness. The literary class of Edinburgh constitutes its aristocracy —there is no better society, nor should there be. This is highly honourable to the Scotch character.

"I suppose all are in great spirits in London at the news from Portugal—'Vimiera!' and the despatches of Sir Arthur Wellesley. We shall have a long drama yet in that country."

When Elliston was at Glasgow, in the course of this northern trip, he dined on one occasion in the public room of an inn, in which there was an elderly Scotch gentleman, who had already taken his midday meal, and was quietly enjoying his tumbler of whisky-toddy.

His exterior was not prepossessing. He wore a short sandy wig, which the temperature of many seasons, and the animal caloric of the wearer, had so puckered up, that it came scarce midway of his pole, which was about as red as a brick-bat. He had lost an eye, and by a singular incidence, every alternate tooth, so that his capacious jaws resembled a kind of tusky portcullis, which led to the citadel of his stomach. His cravat was narrow and loose, for his neck was of amazing dimensions. But the stranger soon discovered better qualities than a comely exterior, for he was thoroughly good-natured, and extremely communicative.

In Elliston, he had met with no uncongenial

spirit—they soon entered into familiar conversation; and having brought their rummers to one common table, were *tout franc* " as thick as thieves."

Here they sat together, hob and knob, for a considerable time. Since his arrival in the north, Elliston had served a steady apprenticeship to the mountain dew, and might fairly be considered nearly out of his time; but in this, he found equally his inferiority to his present companion as to his host of the " Red Cow," for he had already finished a pint, (a Scotch pint, be it remembered,) and was still hard at work. At length, after a hearty burst of merriment on the part of the stranger, he threw himself back into his chair, and deliberately drawing forth his watch, said,

" And so, you're a stage-actor, you tell me. Perhaps ye're acquainted with Harry Johnston?" To this Elliston having made assent, his companion proceeded—

" Weel, weel; and now, Sir, I've to tell you one thing more. I have passed twa pleasant hours —vary pleasant hours in your society; within twanty minutes, d'ye mind, from this time, I shall be sa drunk, that I wi'na be able to utter one word, and I just think it right to tak the present opportunity, while I'm noo intelligible, of telling ye who I am. My name is Scafield, and I live five gude miles awa' from Glasgow, and I shall walk ev'ry foot on't, this vary night, and I'll just come and see

if you're as brave a lad as Harry Johnston, to-morrow night; for I'll come and see ye act, and my family shall see ye act too."

Having made this speech, Mr. Scafield again betook himself to the whisky. He was verily as good as his word; within twenty minutes, he was no more; for in a last effort to keep up the fire, off went the wig, and he rolled from his chair, "taking the measure of an unmade grave." Elliston here called aloud for the waiter; but to his surprise, Sandy seemed to take but little notice of the prostrate North Briton, only remarking,

"Eh! as sure as deeth, its na' but Mr. Scafield —he'll walk hame to night, I warrant ye; but you'd better let him bide—he's used to it, and we're all used to it here."

On the following night, Elliston acted *Belcour*. His friend Scafield was in this instance, also, as good as his word. There he was in the theatre, amongst the earliest comers—his polished sconce, like a half-peeled orange—there he was,—and about him, two fine strapping lasses, his daughters, and the gude wife, Mrs. Scafield, to boot.

Elliston had no opportunity of again meeting his eccentric companion, as he quitted Glasgow within three days from this occurrence.

Not to mention the days when kings themselves condescended to turn playwrights—when Charles

the Second altered an incident in the plot of Dryden's "Aurungzebe," it is enough that, at this period of our history, by the liberal patronage of George the Third, theatricals were in a flourishing state, and particularly in the provinces—not merely in those considerable cities and towns, to which we have had occasion to allude, but in obscurer country places, many of which, either in barn or booth, contrived to have their circuit-going comedians, while in London it was still the fashion "to go to the play;" so that at this time, the words of the critic in the days of Garrick and Macklin, were in equal force—namely, that England had four estates, the King, the Lords, the Commons, and the *Players*.

Of strollers, there is a curious anecdote, relating to the remote period of 1587, not generally known.

When the Spanish Armada was hovering on the coast, a company of vagrant actors were performing a piece called "Sampson," in a booth, at Penryn; and the enemy having silently landed a body of men, were making their way, at night, to burn the town; when fortunately, at that instant, the players having let Sampson loose on the Philistines, the sound of drums, trumpets, and shouts created such a tremendous hubbub, that the Spaniards fancied the whole town, with Beelzebub at their back, were pouring down upon them, and immediately turning tail, scampered off to their ships.

This anecdote, will doubtless remind the reader of the amusing incident in "Tom Jones," where the drum of the puppet showman so terrified poor Partridge, that he fancied the Chevalier, Jenny Cameron, and all the rebels were at hand, and that his dying hour was come.

In 1733, an itinerant company of comedians proceeded even to the island of Jamaica, and actually realized a large sum of money by acting, They received 370 pistoles, the first night of "The Beggar's Opera," but within the space of two months, they had buried their *Polly*, *Mrs. Slammakin*, *Filch*, and two others of the gang.

The gentlemen of the island, for some time, took their turns upon the stage, to keep at least the *diversion* alive; but this did not last long, for within two months more, there were but one old man, a boy and a woman of the original company, surviving. The party had died either by the distemper of the country, or the effects of rum punch, a beverage so frequently fatal to new comers.

The shattered remains of the crew, with upwards of 2000 pistoles in bank, embarked for Carolina, to join another company at Charlestown; but they also perished, having been cast away on the voyage!

Had Jeremy Collier lived in these days, he scarcely could have failed noticing this, as an in-

stance of the just wrath of heaven at the sinfulness of stage plays.*

* Collier's anger, however, appears to have been directed against the abuses of the stage, for he does allow that the wit of man cannot invent more efficacious means of encouraging virtue and depressing vice, than the drama.

CHAPTER XIV.

Elliston climacteric — *Bonne fortune* — Hazard — A "City Madam"—Amatory retribution—A trip to Sevenoaks—*Contretemps*—Lucky escape—Anonymous correspondents—Observations thereon—"Invisiblina!"—Poetry and marvels—Prose and mystery—Bacchanalian indiscretions—The Jubilee—A fête in Stratford Place—"Romeo" Coates—Anecdote of Pope — Elliston's "himself!" — Covent Garden Theatre—O. P. riots—Mr. Kemble.

ELLISTON may now be considered to have attained that culmination of public favour, which the configuration of the stars had predicted, at his birth.

The year 1809 had advanced *Napoleon* and the Comedian to the ascendant of their glory. *Wagram* and Drury were interwoven! The forms of the two actors stood out in bold relief from the crowded canvass of events, and either felt he had no longer a rival, except in the contemplation of the other.

Destiny seemed enamoured of the parallel; wilder and more hazardous were their projects yet to come, but success had attained its zenith, and though

more fiery in progress, the day was still wasting, and the moments numbered.

It may be well suspected by those, whose tastes have led them to a close acquaintance with what is called "life," that Elliston, by nature well-favoured, skilled in the art of pleasing, with passions, which like wine, are termed "generous," and with the attraction of a sparkling notoriety, was open to some of those perils so inseparable from a state of polite community.

Under the gaudy guise of "*bonne fortune*," the Siren conceals her snaky tresses — youth, blood, imagination, vanity, and "money in the purse," are alike equally assailed, and when we recollect how vulnerable was our hero, (if he may be still permitted to retain the title,) collectively and severally in these particulars, it will be as little doubted what was the issue of the conflict.

Elliston, who was really fond of his wife, and when in her company preferred her to any other woman on earth, might have been startled, perhaps, at hearing he was not a good husband.

Constantly in the habit of listening to his own praises, and never subject to direct reproaches, he amused his conscience with a convenient credulity, whilst he indulged his inclinations with the more substantial fare of their hearty gratification. That affection which he really possessed, was but an involuntary virtue, which he never dreamt of pro-

tecting by either fortitude or restraint; and so long as he cajoled himself that, when palled by the traffic of unrighteous pleasure, he returned to his own home with the chastened feeling of its intrinsic repose, and made confession of the same, he had shewn the best proof of domestic obligations, and given the best redemption of his conjugal pledge.

The ingenious Mr. Fielding has said, speaking of domestic infidelities, "How little does a wife suspect the small share which such an affair has with the heart!" but surely we need not trouble our readers with the refutation of so fatuous a sentiment. The offering of the heart is surely tainted by a dereliction of duty; and it is but the tenacity of nature a little outliving the corruption of the will.

The fact is, Elliston had now become a thorough man of pleasure. *Le jeu, le vin, et les femmes* either occupied him in turns, or not unfrequently made one common cause. For the spendthrift is a man who shoots in a preserve, where the glut of game destroys the pleasure of his sport. His own vainglorious resolutions—the exhortations of his uncle, and that memorable passage of Dr. Johnson, which his dying relative had put into his hands, and which, out of respect to both, our graceless subject had transcribed from Cambridge, to his wife, were all equally forgotten—were lost at play, were buried in the bowl, or more basely dishonoured in the blan-

dishments of his mistresses. He had little reflection but what arose from the wretched chagrin of the hazard table; and to satiety alone was owing any temporary show of decorum.

It is not to be supposed that from the watchful alarms of a devoted wife, or from the quick apprehensions of an intelligent woman, these were things which could hope for any concealment. Mrs. Elliston felt them keenly, but met them wisely; she possessed not the garment of Nessus; she well knew if the strongest tie were broken, little could be expected from inferior restraint—strife and objurgation but gratify the passion of complaint, but make no point in the recuperation of the lost—her reproaches were only those she "could not spare him"—the depression at her heart, and the cloud of sadness which sat weightily on her brow.

The form of play* by which Elliston was chiefly infatuated was hazard, and this he would follow at any brief opportunity, which his more ostensible engagements afforded him. At no period of the day did it come amiss; and the pecuniary supplies which he had received under his uncle's will, added but fresh fuel to the element, rendering "abundance the means of want." At play, as in war, he who

* It has been curiously observed, by a biographer of Mossop, that, abstracted from the sin of gaming and the vices concomitant on the bottle, he was otherwise *a most respectable man.*

draws the sword, commits himself at once to all the havoc of the field.

But this pursuit, varied only by indulgences equally demoralizing, had no power yet over his constitutional energy, or diverted his mind from new schemes of professional speculation. The heated and protracted pastime of the previous night, borrowed not a moment from his more creditable occupations of the morrow. Punctual at his appointments, in full possession of his subject, and directing the routine of business, his bodily constitution long sustained him in these multifarious draughts upon its resources, which if singly and well directed might have raised him the brightest ornament of dramatic art, either operative, literary, or intellectual.

It was, alas! but a few years afterwards that his legal adviser had occasion to remark, "Elliston, you come to me fresh drunk at night and stale drunk in the morning, and expect me to talk with you on matters of business; depend upon it sobriety is as good a policy as honesty." But as Mr. D'Israeli observes, "the errors of men are as instructive as their virtues," we may claim permission to proceed.

Amongst the number of Elliston's gambling associates, was a gentleman of the medical profession, residing in the city. To this individual Elliston had lost, from time to time, considerable sums of money;

and under strong suspicion of foul play in his adversary. But we would by no means extend any misjudged pity to him who is a prey to sharpers, for his fate is too frequently only that of a less skilful knave within the fangs of a greater; and although not the slightest imputation of unfairness was ever attached to the subject of these Memoirs, yet he must be content to share no better sympathy in his distresses, than that with which we are accustomed to regard the overthrow of black-legs themselves.

In spite of these occurrences, "frequent losses and no reverse," Elliston was still an *ami de maison* of his city acquaintance, who, whether bleeding his victims at home or his patients abroad, was equally turning all occupations to the same profitable account, and with just an equal respect to principle. He was a man, in fact, who looked on the intervention of honour in the journey of life, as he would on a timber felled across a pathway, which his nimbleness soon vaulted over, but left it still a barrier against his less agile fellow travellers.

The truth is, the general practitioner had an exceedingly pretty wife, who though scarcely meriting a milder fate than that which awaited her in such an union, was nevertheless the subject of the basest perfidy; for the husband having speedily squandered the "pretty little fortune" his own Caroline had brought by marriage, she was now either totally neglected, or valued only as the convenient instru-

ment to more extensive plunder. The lady, however, was not one of those weak-minded persons who take these kind of matters greatly to heart, for, like a sensible woman, she far more valued the admiration of many to the affection of one; and as this precisely suited the sporting practitioner's "book," he was inclined to believe his matrimonial scrip might some day or other turn out no idle investment.

This lady was well calculated to engage the *blasé* imagination of the comedian, while he himself, ever ready with that sequacious sophistry by which principle is more outraged than by open defiance, looked on his amatory intercourse in this direction as an act of self-justice, and any dividend of the wife's favour, as a kind of set off to the husband's obligations; or perhaps boldly justified his own investment of the citadel, by the governor's abandonment of the fortifications.

> "For *he* e'enwhile the "*Honeymoon*" did last,
> Found certain hours at home extremely stupid;
> Hymen, no doubt had leaden pointings cast
> Upon the arrows of young Master Cupid."

In fact Elliston carried on the affair pretty well his own way. Hitherto had there been no surprises—none of those dramatic shifts and hazards which constitute the very essence of the old comedy; for he was neither secreted in a sack nor thrust into a chimney.

We remember somewhere to have heard of a Spanish lover who was popped into a pigsty by his mistress, on the sudden arrival of her husband. The pigs, not liking their companion, began to make a very natural noise, on which the lover commenced also grunting with surprising power of mimicry. The husband, hereupon, in great terror, approached the sty, crying out, "In the name of the Virgin, what art thou?" On which the lover replied, "I am only a poor pig, sir, as I have a soul to be saved!" At which the husband, thinking it was the devil in ambush, ran out of the house for a priest, and thus gave the youth an opportunity for escape.

An incident occurred in the course of the above intimacy, ludicrous enough, if we could but divest it somewhat of its less impudicious nature, which we will only notice *en passant*. Elliston, on one of these "wine and walnut re-unions," had proposed to this lady an excursion to the delightful town of Sevenoaks, and as her husband was not to be admitted into the secret, (for though assuredly he was one "not wanting what is stolen," yet in a court of law, like them all, he would doubtless appear "the most affectionate and attached of husbands,") the expedition was to be conducted by some dexterity on both sides.

The three days' absence of the medical gentleman at Doncaster, might have rendered the lady's escape safe enough, as far as he was concerned, but it was

deemed expedient to take some precautions in respect of good-natured friends and casual acquaintances, with which most neighbourhoods swarm; who might perhaps conceive it a bounden duty to remove any blissful ignorance from before the eyes of a husband, and help him liberally to the tree of knowledge, and all the consequences of the fruit *degout.*

It was therefore arranged that the lady should equip herself in a suit of mourning, assisted by the most positive of all female disguise—a widow's cap. Thus attired, she was to glide stealthily from home, when, at an appointed spot, the comedian was to receive her into a hackney coach, whence they were to proceed across the water, and subsequently start by post-chaise for the salubrious retreat of Sevenoaks.

"Expectata dies aderat."—The morning dawned; and the lady prepared herself for the part she was called on to enact, with that self-possession, as almost to have induced belief the character were no longer fictitious. In perfect safety this "lone woman" traversed the street of her own abode, and, after threading sundry by-ways, arrived, within a few minutes, at the appointed corner, where the enterprising actor was in readiness to receive her.

Here they entered a hackney-coach, but taking unwisely the direction of Ludgate Hill, their pro-

gress was, for a considerable time, impeded by the multitude of vehicles which are always encountered on this spot. During this suspense, sundry persons, well known to our exemplary wife and widow, passed and re-passed, whilst the lady's security was undoubtedly owing to the nature of her disguise, and her own imperturbability of manner.

Having traversed Blackfriars Bridge, this worthy couple reached the spot where the post-chaise was in waiting, and Elliston, with a grace and easy audacity, which would have become *Ranger* himself, tendered his services to the transrhedation of his companion.

At this moment, a gawky lad, in a tawdry livery, laden with cheese, grocery, and other articles of household consumption, who had been loitering at a shop-window near the spot, now suddenly rushed forward, and casting himself before the widow, in the most grotesque posture of alarm, began to blubber out, in disjointed accents of distress,

"Wooh! wooh! ha! ha!—wooh! ha! poor master! poor master! ha! ha! ha!"

The self-possession even of that lady who forms our present subject, was not proof against this abrupt outpouring of human agony; whilst Elliston looked on, for the moment, if not with equal confusion, at least with as much indecision of purpose. But the lad still kept up his generous grief in unabated roaring, and as the spot on which the scene

occurred was sufficiently public, he soon brought about him a most ample auditory.

It turned out that the youth, who had some time since served in the capacity of doctor's boy, to the general practitioner in the city, had been discharged on suspicion of having stolen the fœtus of a hedgehog, preserved in spirits, and deposited till then in his master's laboratory; and being thus unexpectedly impressed with the untimely dissolution of his late employer, he had burst into those demonstrations of grief, which had now become positively a howl.

Another gasp or two might have brought him a little to himself, but on wheeling round, and perceiving the commissariate wreck of tea, sugar, cheese, and pickles, scattered at his feet, the sluices of his agony were again forced, resembling far more the ululation of a bull-calf than the sympathetic tones of a heart-stricken page.

The nature of all this was soon apparent to one so deep in the equivoque of comedies as our hero. He immediately took up the clew thus thrown into his hands, and having rescued the widow from the sticky fingers of the hysteric lad, and deposited her within the yellow post-chaise, he led the youth, with true "Ellistonian" solemnity, apart from the crowd, and entering into a circumstantial account of the calenture which had so unexpectedly removed the object of his lamentations from the troubles of

this world, and described with accuracy the vault in Allhallows Church, where his good master's remains were deposited, together with the couplet to be engraven on the monumental stone, he left him in lawful possession of half-a-guinea, to recal his spirits and refit his stores. And now stepping into the vehicle, with the same solemnity of mien in which he had conducted the previous business, the fugitives were once again on their adventurous way.

The lady was soon restored to that ineffable complacency, out of which, before this day, she had never been surprised; and having, with admirable dexterity, as she sat, relieved the sweet oval of her countenance from those vile weeds, and liberated her abundant tresses, black as the raven, (and, peradventure, as full of omen,) from which the glow of animation, and the gleam of triumph, "looked out and smiled;" and having commuted the dense fall of Norwich crape, beneath which, quick suspiration so long had laboured, for the light and fantastic thread of Brussels, our Bread Street "Berenice" shone out again in all her pristine loveliness.

Matters being thus restored, Elliston and the apothecary's wife arrived at Bromley.

It is Hume, we believe, who hands us the doctrine, that the errors which we are now compelled to fix on our frail hero, are only such, that

when known are but trifles, and when concealed are of no offence at all.

Our fugitives were precisely of the same school—and as the virtuous pair bowled down the rich vales of Kent, the comedian did justice to the poet as he repeated after him—

> "I envy not that bliss, if he or she
> Think fit to live in perfect chastity.
> Pure let them be, and free from taint or vice,
> I, for a few slight spots, am not so nice.
> Not ev'ry man's obliged to sell his store,
> And give up all his substance to the poor;
> Such as are perfect may, I can't deny,
> But, by your leaves, Divines, so am not I."

"Exquisite!" responded the lady.

And now we beg to give up any further pursuit either of the parties or the narrative, of which we should, in all probability, have made not the slightest notice, but for the little episodical incident just recorded.

Should we have wearied our readers with folly, we will at least not outrage them by vice, for historical justice is not to be vindicated by mere truth alone, which, under certain phases, may be as unseemly as falsehood itself; nor should it ever be content to purchase an *aventure exquise* at the expense of a moral lesson.

There is a certain species of attack to which it is

very obvious men whose avocations bring them immediately before the public, are more open than those of a private station, and to which of all others, the pursuits of an actor offer the greatest temptation —we mean that of *anonymous communications*.

The actor, is one whose accessible ground in life and popular engagements, render him strikingly liable to these kind of offences, as the perpetrators of them are, for the most part, actuated by no deeper design than the gratification of an idle excitement, which the elevated position of, for instance, a state functionary or servant of the crown, affords not such direct means of gratifying.

For these, epistolary guerillas have much additional zest in the feeling of caste approximation with their objects, and the probability, on some occasion or other, of personally witnessing the working of their occult imaginings. An anonymous attack on an officer of state yields but a tame gratification to the general class of these sporting characters—the bird is of too lofty a flight; its "aiery buildeth in the cedar's top;" but the game which flies nearer the ground, while it is more easy to strike, tumbles also so immediately within the ken of the marksman in ambush, that he has frequently the pleasing satisfaction of being an eye-witness to the very writhings of his victim.

True it is, that no elevation is a security from these attacks; but eagles are not shot at every day;

and though the more expert weapon is sometimes raised against this nobler flight, yet it comes not within either the power or ambition of that "hempen homespun" class of which we speak, to carry the rifle of "Junius."

As the intentions of these anonymous specimens may be of all possible variety, so do the party-coloured duties of an actor offer as many premiums to the folly of this propensity.

The actor, for example, is a *lessee* who has given umbrage to some "play-goer;" who could get no seat in the pit, last night, at half price. Down goes the "play-goer" to the Morning Herald with an epistolary effusion, which if rejected there, finds its way into the lessee's private room with a few additional epithets—or, he is a *manager*, who has disappointed the fond visions of some poetical gentleman, who, so far from being desirous of concealing his name, has hitherto dreamt only of its immortality, by a sulphureous melodrama. Up goes the young gentleman and bleeds his fever in a wretched lampoon—or, he is a *player*, whose success on a certain evening has whetted the secret axe of some would-be rival in the part. Off he goes, and the comedian's wife soon hears something of her husband which is *not* "to his advantage."—But chiefly, he is a young, handsome, enterprising, popular, "no care devil" *actor*, who has quickened the pulse of some innamorata, whom fear of discovery alone has hitherto preserved from sinning, and whose

ignorance of the machinery of adventure, has until now protracted the gratification of her desires.—Up she goes—up to that chintz second floor back, with hot-pressed thoughts and stationery, and the manager-actor by that very evening's post, hears of the anonymous martyr, with a little hint to the revelation of her spirit.

Of these favours, in all their interesting variety, Elliston had his share—perhaps more than his share—the grosser threats, however, for the most part, fell blunted at his feet; but for the shafts of Cupid, as they were levelled at something more tender than a manager's conscience, he was not unfrequently desperately wounded.

We shall readily be spared particular disclosures, which would by no means tend to elevate the dignity of our history; but we must take leave to mention one example of the above, so intimately interwoven with the subsequent days of our subject, as to be positively inextricable from our duty as biographer. This was an anonymous, or rather pseudonymous friend, who stuck to him for eighteen years, the first letter being received by Elliston in January, 1809, and the last in 1827.

But the curiosity was not fixed in this alone. These letters, received in the course of the time just alluded to—some in the airy dress of poetry, others in the more sober garb of prose—some addressed to Elliston himself, others to his wife—some sharply castigatory, others softly adulatory—

some affecting dramatic matters, others relating to domestic concerns,—all in the most unequivocal terms of regard, but not a syllable to flatter the most credulous fancy in less innocent imaginings, were in number, at least *one hundred*, and bearing the signature "*Invisiblina !*" Suffice to say, the correspondent avowed but only her sex—for the rest, the mystery followed Elliston to his grave.

It might be well imagined that no means or artifice had been left untried for the discovery of "Invisiblina." Letters, accompanied by no inconsiderable presents to the wife and family of Elliston, had from time to time, been left under her direction, at his residence. Trinkets, game, books, birth-day odes, all bearing the impress "*Invisiblina,*" had found their way, by public conveyance, to Stratford Place. Sometimes, indeed, despatches had arrived by other messengers, and once the vigilance of Elliston had intercepted a bearer, but the *employé* was worthy the mistress he served, and baffled effectually every inquiry.

"Invisiblina" was a pixy of no common order; nothing relative to the comedian, or his transactions, was hidden from her knowledge. She was in possession of all he did, and penetrated even his designs. His transgressions stood in recorded lines against him within a day of their commission. Like Frankenstein, he was in the power of an agency he could not elude; but unlike Frankenstein, he was the subject of a beneficent director.

At times, however, Elliston was almost driven to madness by these inexplicable transactions.

Gifts had reached him, which he was called on to acknowledge through the public journals; and reproaches had reached him, which he was only called on to acknowledge by a reformation of his errors.

"Invisiblina" was a spirit of honour—for with these errors she meddled only to reclaim the husband, not to afflict the wife. To Mrs. Elliston she was a friend and benefactor; to Elliston himself, a benefactor and a monitor.

Year after year, lustrum after lustrum succeeded, and no guess had been afforded to these perplexing benefits. Plots laid by Elliston (which we shall hereafter notice more particularly in their places) had been rendered abortive—schemes for the discovery of "Invisiblina," which "Invisiblina" herself had better cognizance of than some of the agents for their accomplishment; and while the comedian knew not so much as the very element in which she dwelt, there was no corner in his own existence shut out from her intelligence.

We will beg leave to offer a brief *recueil* (for we can well spare it) from the hortatory piles in our possession—poems, which, if they do not reach posterity, are at least long enough; and prose sufficient to compose a *corpus epistolare* for all the dramatic generations which are yet behind.

The following was amongst the earliest specimens received:—

"May the blessings of life, now and ever befriend you!
Love of children and wife, in your efforts attend you!
Ev'ry sentence abroad, all your actions acquit,
And your conscience applaud ev'ry thought you admit!
But escape you can never the vigilant eye
Of that Spirit unknown—your *Invisible Spy.*

"May you ever advance in the path you've selected!
May you win ev'ry chance, if the cause be respected!
May your offspring be proud of the parent they find,
And the drama endow'd with the wealth of your mind!
But years shall revolve, and my caution be nigh,
And ne'er shall you know your *Invisible Spy.*"

Some days afterwards—

"I send to Mrs. Elliston
A token of regard;
To you, a caution to be wise,
In language of the bard.
Three lonely hours, when midnight past,
Watch'd she, and you away—
Worse, worse than absent—*Thursday last!*
In riot, wine, and play!

"Beware! beware! these dangers fly!
Lest sorrows round thee flock;
For she will henceforth watch you by
'Invisiblina's' CLOCK.
The steady hand upon its round,
Which points the minutes now,
Shall tell you are employ'd unfound,
And ticking, whisper—*how.*"

With the above, to Elliston himself, a handsome dial was forwarded to his wife. The verses evidently allude to some late indiscretion of our hero.

Again, the vigilance of "Invisiblina" appears to have tracked him in his wanderings—

"'Two nights together,' so Horatio said,
'He and Marcellus had not been in bed—'
Two nights together, speak your constant crime,
How much you lost—much more—than merely *time*.
Hours, guineas, squander'd—better far have kept 'em—
Rather *pay* bills, believe me,—than *accept 'em!*"

The following is one of Elliston's advertisements in the *Morning Post*, in conformity to the will of the "Invisible Power:"—

"To 'Invisiblina.' The acknowledgment of the receipt of a present to 'Blanche,' commonly called 'Juliet,'* was duly sent to the *Morning Post*, but from the multiplicity of advertisements, and the pressure of other business, it has unavoidably been delayed.

"Why does so beneficent a being withhold herself from receiving personal demonstrations of gratitude, for innumerable favours? Why should thanks, fresh and warm from the heart, be forced through the artificial channel of the press, and be poured out, cold and clouded, on the altar of 'Invisiblina?' Mysterious being, 'unfold thyself!'"

We subjoin one letter further from "Invisiblina," which will sufficiently explain itself:—

"Descending from the regions of air to become

* The present here alluded to appears to have been sent to Mary Juliet Elliston, born 21 July, 1809, died in September, 1811.

earthy and of the flesh, I visited Drury Lane Theatre on Monday last, to witness again your impersonation of the *Duke Aranza*.

" Believe me, I was disappointed. You have become careless and inflated—undignified and unnatural. The freshness and native bloom of this portraiture is faded, and the complexion supplied by the daub of harlotry. Trifle no longer with public favour—for he who loses the wealth he once possessed, becomes poorer than he who was never rich.

" Beware the acetous fermentation of sudden popularity ! it will eat into your very vitals, and search you beyond even the art of ' Invisiblina.'

" The journals have spoken truly of you—had you acted this part on the first night of the representation of the play, in the manner of Monday last, it never had been one step in the ladder of your fame. Leave burlesque and harlequinade to other places, and for other hands—poor Lord Harcourt would have been pained to the heart had he witnessed what I witnessed."

There can be but little question that " Invisiblina" was a sound critic as well as a fast friend. Elliston, though still continuing attractive, particularly in his comic parts, had given just offence on various occasions, not only by slovenliness in acting, but by indiscretions of convivial indulgence, of which he appeared ambitious the public should have the most unequivocal evidence.

An occasion of this kind had nearly lost him the friendship of his valuable ally, Warner Phipps, who despatched to him so severe a lecture on the folly of intemperance, that the actor, doubly grand and important as he ever was, when he knew he had been playing the profligate, knocked at his friend's door, for the purpose of demanding what he called satisfaction—and satisfaction he really had, for Phipps, in addition to his former threats, gave him to understand he should also throw up all management of Elliston's pecuniary affairs, if these *divertissements* were repeated, and should also put in force certain bond debts on the part of the comedian, while there might be yet something unsquandered to liquidate them.

Elliston, like those who came to scoff, remained to pray, was sufficiently humbled at the interview; but meeting, soon after, one of his nightly companions, who had been apprised of the actor's hostile intentions, Elliston assured him that Mr. Phipps, having made every apology which a gentleman ought to demand, he could of course feel no otherwise than propitiated!

This was thoroughly "Ellistonian"—with such illusions did he often comfort himself, like one we have heard of, who, being scarcely able to command a dinner, would look disdainfully at the elevation of legislators, exclaiming, "These are the people whom I pay to think for me!" Yet, spite of all these remonstrances from Phipps and others, we

fear Elliston had too fatally contracted the " second nature"—a habit of wine. We remember to have heard of a Turk, who had an eunuch who used to get drunk, whom he swore by Mahomet, he would strangle if he ever committed the offence again. Yet the eunuch still continued to drink. The Turk, now believing that there must be some extraordinary charm in liquor, since this man preferred it to life, fell to it himself, and very soon drank himself into the grave.

On the event of the great national jubilee, Elliston, in the ardour of gratitude to royal patronage which he had long enjoyed, gave a fête in Stratford Place, to a select party of his own and Mrs. Elliston's friends; which, divested of some *bizarreries*, was reasonable enough. But Elliston could do nothing like other people—all his designs were a little larger than life, and he was ever making that advance beyond the sublime, which we have long been taught is but a step.

Dr. Kitchener, Mr. Phipps, Pope, Johnstone, and the celebrated Mr. " Romeo" Coates were of the entertainment—a party well-suited to elicit the peculiarities of the latter gentleman, who though never wanting encouragement, was now in the hands of a host, who, like Wycherley himself, had the peculiar fomentous quality of bringing the humours of men at once to a head.

Mr. Coates, of course, was called on to recite,

and Dr. Kitchener well observing that, as music was a sister art, he should accompany the recitative with appropriate bars on the pianoforte. This was accordingly put into operation, but the playful "sister," not so observant of that *sinfonia* as she might have been, fell on the tender passages of *Lothario* with such an astounding *obligato*, that the aspirations for *Calista* were completely drowned in the murder of the Innocents.

But of all this, the "Amateur of Fashion" was himself equally innocent, or if, perhaps, pushed too far, received some opportune encouragement which rendered him again heroic; as Swift tells a story of a Jew at Madrid, who being condemned to the flames, a crowd of boys followed him to his martyrdom, and fearing they might lose their sport should he recant, tapped him on the back, crying out, "Sta firme, Moyse!"

"It is frequently in that nice discrimination, in which our greatest actors fail," observed Mr. Coates, "you will perceive in me indications of delicacy in recitations, that neither Booth, Barry, Garrick, nor Kemble ever exhibited. When I address myself to Providence, I always raise the left hand—the innocent, the inoffensive limb! The right arm is the instrument of war and devastation."

"True," replied Pope; "but it is also the right hand of fellowship."

"Ay—ay," rejoined "Romeo," a little puzzled; "but I am ambidextrous." Saying which, he

turned towards two ladies, and taking one in each arm, seated himself between them, " Now, this is what I call Love amongst the Roses," cried he.

To do Mr. Coates justice, however, Elliston repeated a " bon mot" of his guest, which gained him better applause. They were speaking together of the merits of a certain great actor, when some one by, observed, " That gentleman is beyond all praise."

" Yes," replied Romeo, " so far beyond it, that it will never reach him."

Pope's besetting sin, *gastronomie*, is well remembered. Amongst the many anecdotes related concerning him, is a humorous equivoque, which transpired at Drury Lane. The " Suspicious Husband" was in rehearsal, in which Pope had gone through the character of *Mr. Strickland*, but the actor who was to have sustained the part of his servant, *Tester*, being " suddenly taken ill," (as all theatrical misadventures are called,) a very underling, who had scarcely ever spoken a line on the stage, was called on to fulfil his duty. After the morning's rehearsal, which this unhappy wight got through with fear and trembling, his next puzzle was respecting his costume. Accosting Pope just as he was passing off at the wing, with marked submission, but with a nervous abruptness, said, " Pray, Sir, how is it to be dressed?" But Pope, who had ever one thing uppermost in his thoughts, namely, first and second course, *entrées*, &c., replied as abruptly, " Stuffed,

to be sure—stuffed by all means." With this intelligence, his friend, the actor, departed.

On the evening of the play's representation, when "all ladies and gentlemen concerned" were met in the Green Room, ready to go on for their respective parts, in walks the *Tester* of the night, as complete a *Falstaff* in livery, as could possibly have been accomplished. In costume, at least, he had gallantly resolved there should be no deficiency; for the *small clothes*, in fact, could scarcely contain the weight he carried The shrieks of the assembled party can be well imagined. "In the name of all that's wonderful, what is this?" was the universal demand. "Why! why! Mr. Pope said it should be stuffed, and may the devil fetch me, but I've had trouble enough," said the terrified votary of art.

But the "Follies of a Day" were not altogether appropriated by one person. Elliston, who could never walk the earth, except bearing the helmet of Achilles, was to-night more than usually magnificent. The supper was consecrated by "Non nobis Domine," and a piece of small artillery from the tiles of Stratford Place announced the "King's health!" to the consternation of the whole parish. This was followed by a speech from the host himself, being under the positive impression, the eyes and ears of Europe were at that moment upon him.

On the 19th of September, the new splendid

theatre in Covent Garden was opened with "Macbeth," and "The Quaker," an event memorable by the "O. P." riots, which were nightly continued until the 16th of December.

The revival of many of Shakspeare's finest plays, particularly "Julius Cæsar" and "Coriolanus," under the masterly hands of John Kemble, carried this order of drama, in scenic representation, to a higher pitch, perhaps, than it had ever previously attained. English Comedy belongs not more to the time of Charles II., than the loftier Drama to the period of Siddons and Kemble—true, there was Betterton in the earlier age, yet, like Sir Walter Scott, he stood alone in his peculiar art; but the united excellence of the Kemble family in impersonation, and the intelligent direction of the one in scenic appliances, rendered the Shaksperian Drama their own appropriate renown.

As Schlegel speaks of his countryman Winkelman, so Kemble "transformed himself completely into an ancient, and lived only in appearance in his own land, unmoved by its influence." The days are past; and, like most glories which are past, appear irrevocable: the prophetic language of Dr. Johnson rises in our mind, and we now live but to fulfil a like spirit of prediction:—

> "Perhaps where Lear has wept, and Hamlet died,
> On flying cars new sorcerers may ride;
> Perhaps (for who can guess th' effects of chance)
> Here Hunt may box, or Mahomet may dance."

CHAPTER XV.

Drury Lane Theatre destroyed—Miss Farren—Mrs. Jordan—Letter to Sheridan—The Opera House—Lyceum—Natural history, rats, bugs—Covent Garden Company—Lord Harcourt's death—Miss Mellon—Ornithology—Miss Warren—Whimsical hoax—A Custom House clerk—A parlour scene—An uproar—"Invisiblina," lost.

On the 24th of February of this year (1809), a convivial theatrical party was assembled in Lincoln's-inn Fields, at the house of Mr. Richard Wilson, a gentleman who had been appointed, in 1802, one of the board of management of Drury Lane Theatre.

This annual meeting had long been of the most joyous character. The host, esteemed for his hospitality, and the guests, comprising the leading performers of the above establishment, together with some of the choice spirits of the day, could hardly fail constituting a reunion of the most animated description. The "King's health!" had been already expressed in suitable demonstrations of loyalty, and

Mr. Wilson was in possession of his friend's attention, by an occasional speech, on the state of affairs at Drury Lane, when about concluding his statement, with a hearty hurrah for its lasting prosperity, the butler rushed into the room, and announced Drury Lane Theatre in flames!

The consternation may be easily imagined. In a moment the house of festivity was a desert—the whole party hurrying to the scene of destruction. A body of constables, as usual in such cases, had formed a barrier at a distance from the theatre, which Elliston had some difficulty in passing. He was, however, soon recognised, and fortunate enough in gaining that part of the building in which he had deposited sundry articles of value, amongst them, a specialty, on which he was just about to sue the individual liable under it.

Unhurt, but without his hat, he escaped with these effects from the burning pile, on which he had scarcely congratulated himself, when he discovered his watch was gone. The rogues! it was a gold repeater, which had belonged to the late Master of Sidney; the only tangible memorial which there had been any chance of his nephew's retaining, for all other bequests, being money, were about as secure in the hands of Elliston, as the Apollo at that very moment, on the liquefying roof of old Drury.*

* We subjoin the following extract from Moore's Life of Sheridan, on this calamitous event. "On the night of the

It is curious to remark, that on the opening of the late theatre, which cost 129,000*l.*, an occasional epilogue, spoken by Miss Farren, assured the public that a conflagration could never take place in that theatre, as they had water enough to drown authors, actors, auditory, and all their applause, to boot—at the conclusion of which, a shower of real water was produced, and an iron curtain let down in sight of the assured spectators. The result, however, forcibly reminds us of a friend, who was only overturned once during his life, in a stage-coach,

24th of February, when the House of Commons was occupied with Mr. Ponsonby's motion on the conduct of the war in Spain, and Mr. Sheridan was present, the house was suddenly illuminated by a blaze of light, and the debate being interrupted, it was ascertained that the theatre in Drury Lane was on fire.

"A motion was made to adjourn, but Mr. Sheridan said that 'Whatever might be the extent of the private calamity, he hoped it would not interfere with the public business of the country.' He then left the house, and proceeding to Drury Lane, witnessed, with a fortitude which strongly interested all, the entire destruction of his property.

"It is said, that as he sat at the Piazza Coffee House, during the fire, taking some refreshment, a friend of his having remarked on the philosophic calmness in which he bore his misfortune, Sheridan answered, 'A man may surely take a glass of wine by his own fireside.'

"Without vouching," continues Moore, "for the authenticity of this anecdote, (which may have been, for aught I know, like the Wandering Jew, a regular attendant upon all fires since the time of Hierocles,) I give it as I heard it."

which happened when he travelled by the "*Patent Safety.*"

The fire happened on a Friday in Lent, when there was no play. It commenced in the coffee-room of the theatre, which fronted Brydges Street, and from which there was a direct communication to the first circle of boxes. The workmen had quitted the house, leaving a flue overheated, and hence the origin of the calamity. The water which was to overwhelm the building in such an event, had been suffered to escape; and as to the iron curtain, there was no assistance at hand to drop it. The ruin was complete—

> "In one dread night, our city saw, and sigh'd,
> Bow'd to the dust, the Drama's tower of pride—
> In one short hour, beheld the blazing fane,
> Apollo sink, and Shakspeare cease to reign."

Amongst the many epistolary attentions which Sheridan received on this event; the following was from Mrs. Jordan:—

"Bushey House, Thursday.

"My dear Sir,—It is not for one with such weak persuasions as mine, to attempt any consolatory address to you under this late calamity, who must have a mind to encounter any misfortune, as to comprehend all subjects. But I feel I should be wanting in respect to you, and most certainly to my own sense of kind obligations, were I to suffer an event, which calls forth the sympathy of the

whole world, to pass unnoticed by one, who has the happiness of being ranked amongst your friends. Believe me, my dear sir, I condole with you sincerely in this late calamity at Drury Lane. I lament, with the public, the destruction of that edifice, on whose ancient site so many dramatic triumphs have been celebrated, and none greater than your own. And I condole with those sufferers who, in having less strength of mind than yourself, may have had more need of it; who, in addition to their loss of all, find themselves unblest by the powers of regaining anything.

"But I am not without satisfaction in finding such prompt exertions are making for the benefit of our extensive company. I shall neither be wanting in effort or goodwill in the cause; and if my humble talent should be deemed advisable, do not let it remain idle on a single occasion.

"My woman has been with me this morning. The attendants have been great sufferers. I am happy to find their salaries will be paid, should the public patronize.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Your sincere friend, and humble servant,

We subjoin a brief extract from *Anthony Pasquin*—a faint memorial of this inimitable child of Thalia.

"In *Nell*, sportive nature's bluff habits are shewn,
And the rose of frank heartedness blushes full blown;
Not a ray issues forth from her keen sable eye,
But gives the tame race of refinement the lie.
The broad jolly rapture she paints with such truth,
That surliness grins in despite of his tooth.
Yet her name's not been raised by illiberal arts,
Her gazers confronted, and rush'd to their hearts.
Her features, applause, like transparencies, win,
Which owe their effects to the light that's within."*

On Thursday, 16th March, the Drury Lane company, under sanction of the Lord Chamberlain, and with the consent of the Drury Lane proprietors, opened the Opera House, for three nights, as stated, for their common benefit. The first performance was "Man and Wife," "Sylvester Daggerwood," and the ballet of "Quichotte," by the whole force of the Opera corps, producing 549*l.* The second night was the "Honeymoon," with an occasional address. Mrs. Jordan acted "*The Country Girl*," on the third night, the receipts being 834*l.* So warmly did the public take up the cause of the Drury refugees, that three additional nights were then announced. On the evening in which Madame

* Mrs. Jordan retired from the stage in 1814. In this memorable year, the sun of Siddons magnificently set, and all eyes were turned to the saffron rising of O'Neil.

Catalani sang, in the part of *Semiramide*, the receipts were 903*l.* The total of these receipts amounted to 4266*l.*,—the principal performers receiving 75*l.* per cent. on their respective salaries—the second class, 87*l.* 10*s.* per cent., and the third class their full demands.

The company then carried on operations at the Lyceum, where they acted for fifty-two nights, and received 13,235*l.* One of their items of expense, on entering, was remarkable enough, viz., 6*l.* 1*s.* for killing bugs, and something less for the professional services of a rat-catcher. The rats, indeed, appear to have had a greater run in the theatre than any other of its productions, for the death of the actors alone put an end to the entertainment.

It is not a little singular, that the very "rat-catcher" himself became, some years afterwards, a member of the Olympic Company, when Winston directed, under Elliston's management. Had this "rat-catcher" played the part of *Tybalt*, nothing could have been more fit.*

For some little time previous to the destruction of Drury Lane Theatre, Arnold, who had obtained a licence for the representation of English operas, had been coquetting with one Lingham, a breeches-

* A far better joke than our own, was uttered by Madame Vestris to Arnold, who, telling her a tailor had applied to him for an engagement at the English Opera House, said, "You had better bring him out as pantaloon."

maker, and proprietor of the Lyceum Theatre, for renting that building for such performances. The house was at this juncture occupied by wild beasts, conjurors, phantasmagorians, &c., "*mendici, mimæ, balatrones,*" (hence, peradventure, the bugs,) bipeds, quadrupeds, and multipeds; for all of which, Arnold fancied he had a charm, potent as that of Orpheus—namely, his own music. But on the Tuesday immediately following the fire, not having come to the *scratch*, (which was really not a little formidable, recollecting the variety of animals he would have to encounter,) Lingham, with laudable activity, offered Sheridan the theatre on the same terms he had named to Arnold, and thus the breeches-maker, fitting the immediate necessities of the Drury dictator, the proposal was agreed to.

The very next day, however, Arnold calls on Lingham, proposing to conclude the negotiation at once, and the tradesman, believing he had been commissioned on the part of the Drury Lane proprietors, (in whose service Arnold was intimately engaged,) without hesitation assented. Everything was therefore supposed to be mutually understood, and the matter was settled; except the formalities of legal instruments.

On the following morning, Lingham quitted London, leaving to his son the power of ratifying this treaty, which was accordingly done, and Arnold, under a written agreement, became lessee for a term of three years.

But the astonishment of the good landlord was by no means slight, when, on his return to town, he discovered who, in fact, his real lessee was; and also, that his son, Mr. Lingham, junior, had consented to the insertion of a clause, giving Arnold the right of purchase at any time within the unexpired term of the lease.

Lingham was by no means indifferent as to a choice of tenants—he preferred the Drury proprietors; and as he fancied a little sharp practice had been employed in the transaction, an attempt was made, on his part, to set aside the agreement; but as it appeared he had given absolute power to his son to act in his behalf, the object was found difficult.

To avoid litigation, the agreement was suffered to remain in force; and the Drury Lane company entered the Lyceum as tenants of Arnold, in the place of Lingham.

The Covent Garden company was at this time carrying on their business at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, previous to the opening of the new and magnificent edifice alluded to in our last chapter, and was perhaps the best body of performers that had ever been got together, in the memory of the living.

It was composed as follows:—Kemble, Cooke, Young, C. Kemble, Pope, Brunton, Murray, &c., Lewis, Jones, Munden, Fawcett, Liston, Emery, Blan-

chard, Simmons, Farley, &c.; Incledon, Taylor, Bellamy, &c.; Grimaldi, Bologna, Byrne, &c.; Mrs. Siddons, Miss Norton, Mrs. St. Ledger, Mrs. Humphries, Mrs. H. Johnston, Mrs. C. Kemble, Mrs. Gibbs, Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Dickons, Mrs. Liston, Miss Meadows, Miss Bolton, &c. &c.

Here was, indeed, a constellation! But scarcely will it be believed that, with this extraordinary assemblage of talent engaged in the Haymarket Theatre—representing, too, the most sterling plays on the national roll—that the receipts were sometimes under the *nightly expenses*, not to mention the great deficit there must have been on the weekly payment of all persons engaged.

This identical company, a few weeks before, acting in the Italian Opera House, rarely failed attracting full audiences—a fact which, undoubtedly, proves that, whether or not large theatres be more beneficial to dramatic representations, the public, at least, like them and prefer them; perhaps under a sort of impression that they get *more* for their money, or that—

> "Magno de flumine mallem,
> Quam ex hoc fonticulo sumere."

The following favour was the last Elliston ever received from his respected and valuable friend, Lord Harcourt; the Earl dying in the spring of this year. It was written but a short time before the

fall of Drury. In this nobleman the family of actors lost one of its most honoured protectors, and the stage itself was deprived of a patron, to whose taste, liberality, and exertions, much of its prosperity had been owing.

"Nuneham, Sunday.

"SIR,—You may be surprised at hearing from me, dated this place, but a near friend of mine—a lady—was last week so delighted with your acting, that she has requested me to beg of you, if possible, to make an arrangement in the theatre, for your playing *Hotspur*, on any day after Tuesday, and secure for Miss Fanquier, Queen Street, Mayfair, the stage and contiguous box, on that side of the house, which would be most advantageous for viewing your principal scenes.

"Lady Harcourt sends her compliments. Pray offer mine to my *old* friend, (for I cannot give up an expression of esteem, out of false politeness to the sex,) my *old* friend, Miss Pope—and believe me your humble servant,

"HARCOURT.

"P.S. I have a copy of Colley Cibber's "Apology," with some interesting emendations by an unknown hand. I purchased it some few years ago, and will take an opportunity for letting you see it."

Elliston, with all his mystery of manner, kept about an equal guard over his secrets as his money,

so that there were many of his friends, who knew as much concerning "Invisiblina" as he himself. This frailty rendered him liable to repeated *mauvaises plaisanteries*, of which the boldest in design was the contrivance of Miss Mellon, who some years afterwards, when Mrs. Coutts, made full confession.

In Norfolk Street, Strand, lodged a gentleman holding a situation in the customs, a Mr. Borrowdale, an old friend of Miss Mellon's family, and whom that lady occasionally visited. He was a staid, systematic bachelor, and as little calculated for the hero of an adventure, as such a character might be naturally imagined; but Miss Mellon having set her heart upon a stratagem, had also as positively made up her mind, he should be the chief agent in the affair.

The gentleman occupied the drawing-room floor of the house in question, and in the lower apartments resided an airy, antique maiden, who was somewhat of "a character." She was a well-disposed person, but her long practice in the artificial *parure* of rouge, had so estranged her perception from the real aspect of nature, that she was now more like a red Indian than a Saxon; or rather her face resembled that appearance, which is sometimes fantastically made by tracing human outlines on an ace of diamonds.

Her next passion was her aviary. In her apartment were collected all specimens of birds, from

the Indus to the Po—the screaming cockatoo to the chattering pie—the common starling to the red-pole finch. Of canaries she had a vast variety, and her apparatus for pairing &c. was very perfect.

Breeding-cages, maw-seed, and scalded rape, were scattered on shelves and tables. In the prolific constitution of these birds she was greatly interested, and had often witnessed the female ready to produce a second brood before the first was able to quit the nest. Her very chintz furniture was patterned with birds, while she herself was as fine a specimen of the red mackaw, as ever came from Delhi or Cashmere.

Her third peculiarity was an everlasting song, which, for one who kept company with birds, is not perhaps so very extraordinary. But it was a song set to the music of her own heart, and the poetic words "My nephew the colonel in India."

Never could she utter a sentence, or address any one, in which "my nephew the colonel in India" did not bear a part. Her acquaintances had heard it a thousand times, and the butcher, when pleading guilty to a tough rump-steak of the day before, secured his condonation by a timely inquiry respecting her last accounts from "her nephew the colonel in India." The starling had of course caught the beloved lesson; while the very walls, which we know have ears, had long been conscious of this only theme.

Miss Mellon had frequently heard her friend speak of this lady and her packet of peculiarities, which were quite enough to induce her, with his aid, to play off a pleasantry both on the spinster and the comedian.

A letter was forthwith concocted and addressed to Elliston, stating, that if he would call at six o'clock on a certain day on Miss Warren, in Norfolk Street, some elucidation would be vouchsafed as to the incomprehensible "Invisiblina."

Miss Mellon was well acquainted with the nights of Elliston's professional engagements, and took care therefore to fix on a practicable occasion; and making no doubt as to the success of her fantasy, took her station in the apartment of her accessory, who in fact became not a little frightened as the plot thickened, and awaited the arrival of their common victim.

St. Clement's clock had already tolled the hour of six, and some twenty minutes grace had elapsed, but no visitor to Miss Warren. The nervous state of the actress and guilty partner, were just in an inverse ratio. As the one was excited, so did the other find relief; when suddenly a knock at the street door set both hearts into a gallop, and the delighted contriver of the plot heard distinctly over the banisters, the well-known accents of *Ranger* demanding admission to Miss Warren. Imagination now supplied a full fruition to her scheme. Miss

Mellon was all ecstasy, but as to the unhappy clerk in the customs, having somewhat the fear of the chief magistrate of Bow Street before his eyes, he was the very picture of woe.

A considerable time elapsed, and Elliston was still closeted with Miss Warren,—"Invisiblina" and "My nephew the colonel in India" were the playful watchwords of the anxious listeners, when their ears were startled by a scream, which positively made the male conspirator tremble in his shoes. Fielding commences one of his chapters by the words "A violent uproar now arose in the entry," and we cannot do better than quote the very language, for at this moment Miss Warren, Elliston, a servant girl, and a Scotch terrier, were in one common state of clamour in the passage; while a general insurrection of the whole aviary, though multiplying the tongues, by no means tended to render the text intelligible.

By an act of involuntary courage, the clerk of the customs sprang down the staircase, when Miss Warren exclaimed, "Oh, Mr. Borrowdale!—Oh, Mr. Borrowdale! that vile bird man has entered my bed-room—Oh, the cormorant! would that my nephew the colonel in India were present."

"Borrowdale, Borrowdale," repeated Elliston, in a supremely comic tone—"the Borrowdales—know them well—come from Cheshire—Cheshire, in Kent—one settled at Acapulco—his sister mar-

ried a Moravian"—at which tirade the custom-house officer stared with a hundred eyes, but on went the *now* hero of the scene.

"Your little woman, Borrowdale, has been somewhat alarmed at the gambols of her cockatoo—I just started up to quiet the bird, when that damned horned owl——but walk in, Borrowdale, and I'll tell you the whole history;" saying which, he hooked the perplexed placeman by the button, and gently persuaded him into the parlour.

Miss Warren, (the crimson drops trickling from her countenance,) here followed both gentlemen into the apartment, when the comedian perceiving a tray of crockery ready for an afternoon's repast, observed with true Ellistonian solemnity, "And now, Madam, we'll take a cup of your exquisite souchong."

Borrowdale, who had wit enough to determine the best course which could be pursued, immediately gave both his hearers to understand, he knew the name and person of Miss Warren's unexpected visitor, and wisely suggested some mistake had been the cause of the vexatious *contretemps*.

The history of the meantime, in which Elliston had been closeted with the spinster, appears to have been this:—He had, of course, arrived, hoping to hear something of "Invisiblina," and Miss Warren rather expecting a visit from a bird-fancier, at about the same time, a most comic equivoque had been the consequence.

But Elliston quickly perceiving that both the lady and himself had been the victims of some wicked plot, and suspecting a conspirator might still lie hid in the adjoining chamber, which turned out to be the lady's bed-room, up he jumped, and with little ceremony forced his way into it. As Sir Anthony Absolute observes, he might also have been "a little too lively," (for the lady opposed his progress,) and hence the scream in defence of her honour, which, like a sweetmeat, had been preserved for many a season, since the ripening on the tree.

But now, partly through the ineffable quality of rich comedy, which was so much the constitution of Elliston, and partly from Miss Warren's mulcible nature, which, to do her justice, was unrivalled, and all this aided by the pacific disposition of the clerk of the "long-room," peace was tolerably restored. The perspiration streamed from Miss Warren, like a tinted water-course in the vicinity of a dyer; but Elliston, who mixed up humanity in his revenge, soon beguiled her of her native good humour, and declared that he would not leave the house, nor should Borrowdale quit the room, until tea, toast, and *noyeau*, had gone the round of the table.

Miss Mellon's employment, in the while, is only to be surmised. Borrowdale made sundry attempts to depart, but the comedian was peremptory, and he could not stir.

It came ultimately to this,—the whole party sat down to cribbage. Miss Warren having won seven shillings, the birds being covered up for the night, and Elliston having declared over and over again, her nephew the colonel in India was one of his early playmates, she was as happy as a queen.

By this time, Elliston, who had nearly discussed the bottle of *noyeau*, was dropping off into a comfortable doze, when a slam of the street door startled the little party, and made the very cages rattle on the walls. The servant maid entering a few minutes afterwards, shuffled up to Borrowdale, and in a kind of ludicrous perplexity, whispered, "The lady's agone, sir;" at which, Elliston opened his eyes, and perceiving renewed confusion in poor Borrowdale's manner, exclaimed—"Lady! what Lady? you hussey!"—"Why, the lady what's a been a watching a you, sir, this whole hour."—"What! what!" repeated Elliston, at the same time seizing Borrowdale with one hand, and Miss Warren's turban and curls with the other, (both of which were eradicated by his grasp)—"Watching! watching, did you say?

A lady!—and gone!—which way?"—saying which, he snatched up his hat, and thrusting the spinster's head gear into his pocket, rushed into the passage. "Which way, wench?" screamed the comedian.—"Can't a tell, sir," responded the maid—an octave higher; "can't a tell, sir,"—and in two minutes Elliston was out of sight.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Royal Circus—Rev. Rowland Hill—His addresses—The Pic Nics—Their diversions—Colonel Greville—Theatrical furor—R. C. Sowden—Infamous hand-bill—Captain Caulfield—John Fuller—A *fracas*—Elliston, *Captain Macheath*—Dr. Busby—New Prologue to Macbeth—Speech and benefit—Sheridan's appointment—Thomas Sheridan—His letter and remonstrance—Elliston's reply—A Greek poet—Another theatre—Disaster.

The Royal Circus Theatre, in Blackfriar's-road, having been advertised for lease or sale, early in this year, Elliston, on the 23rd of February, (the day before the fire at Drury,) sent in proposals as a tenant. The terms demanded by the trustees were, for purchase of the remaining term—nine seasons—20,000*l.*, payable in annual sums, or for a lease of six years, 3000*l.* per annum, the lessee paying ground-rent, taxes, and insurance, amounting to 540*l.* per annum.

After a lengthy correspondence on the subject, Elliston became lessee for seven years, at 2100*l.* per annum, being bound under a covenant not to produce any dramatic pieces of an immoral tendency.

When this theatre was in the course of building, the chapel, erected by the Rev. Rowland Hill, in Blackfriar's-road, was in a similar progressive state; but the divine having observed, with some bitterness of spirit, the great advance the theatre was daily making over the chapel—that the one party worked like bees, whilst his own operatives were sluggish as drones—he took an opportunity of pointedly animadverting on the case, in an address to his congregation, at the place where he was preaching in the meantime:—

"There are two ships," said he, "within sight of a spice island. One is manned by the elect of heaven, and freighted with good works—the other, directed by the devil's crew, and laden with sinfulness. The object of both these craft, is to reach the spicy port as soon as possible; but the devil's ship, if not a better vessel, is more actively manned, —for to do Satan justice he is always industrious. These fellows are crowding all sail till their shrouds crack again, whilst the good and righteous ship is throwing away a fine wind. Let them only land, and the whole shore will become tainted,—this fine aromatic flavour which invites you now, will become

fetid—mephitic, as the scientific people call it—and you will be poisoned on the very pastures which ought to be yours. But push into port, my lads, before them—sanctify the harbour, and then mount the mole. The devil hates holy water. They will never effect a landing, but be off again quickly, as though their master fetched them! Come!—don't let the devil beat you!—a small dividend more upon your earthly pelf, and all will be accomplished!"

This well-timed appeal answered the full purpose. Supplies immediately were added to the failing subscription, and the chapel was finished.

One of the most curious, and equally successful orations of this eccentric divine, about the same time, was in the service of his friend, William Walker, the astronomical lecturer.

Rowland Hill had always inveighed against playhouses, with the asperity of a *Prynne* himself; and, as the very building was rank in the nostrils of this man of sanctity, Walker could have but little hope in finding favour with him, as he was in the habit of engaging the Haymarket Theatre for the purpose of lecturing. He was, however, happily undeceived on this point, for on the occasion alluded to, Rowland Hill thus addressed his auditors:—

"You have often, my friends, heard me denounce the playhouse as a temple of sin, and the habitation of the devil—and I say so still—for their works are carnal, and their words ungodly. But

when our beloved friend and brother, William Walker, introduces the heavenly bodies, it is quite another thing—you may freely enter—enter without prejudice to your souls, and with great benefit to your understandings. And now, let me scatter these notices amongst you. You may go freely, I tell you, on Friday next, and I hope you will."

Saying which, he threw from his pulpit about a dozen of Mr. Walker's printed bills, which were speedily in circulation amongst his congregation.

About this time Elliston was invited to join a theatrical speculation, originated by Colonel Greville, a gentleman well known in the fashionable circles.

This institution was to be called "The Pic Nic." The scheme was, to erect a ball-room, a private theatre, and all the concomitant accommodations of card and supper-rooms, vestibules, &c., under one roof, on a piece of ground then vacant in Albemarle-street, opposite to the Royal Institution, and where the chapel now stands. But not being able to carry this into effect, the Colonel took the King's Concert Room, in Tottenham-street, and issued proposals for carrying on his enterprise on this spot, which documents were actually circulated in the Opera House, and in other fashionable places of amusement.

It is worthy of remark that, some few years

afterwards, Elliston was positively in treaty for the purchase of the above Albemarle Chapel, having serious thoughts of taking holy orders, and preaching therein himself.

Elliston, like our old friend, *Mrs. Cole*, was subject to holy attacks; yet these were but of a chronic nature,—the paroxysms passed speedily away, and his constitution was not materially shaken by the malady. This chapel attack, however, was one of the longest fits he ever had—he was ill for a week.

But to return to the Pic Nic. Numerous caustic assaults, and bitter lampoons, having been publicly levelled at Greville and his speculation, and the managers of the great theatres, particularly Sheridan, having threatened him with legal proceedings, the Colonel announced a tremendous philippic for publication, to which the town was looking forward with eager expectation, when an interview took place between Sheridan and the aggrieved party, which terminated by the Colonel's withdrawing his literary threat, and obtaining the consent of other parties that the Pic Nic should proceed.

The press, however, was not to be silenced. The field was too rich and yielding for the abandonment of the newspapers, and a number of paragraphs appeared, in which various ladies were handed up by inuendo, as the "*Frails*" and "*Foresights*," to whom this house of intrigue would be of the greatest accommodation. But conscious innocence! con-

scious innocence! looked calmly on. The Thespian martyrs rose superior to the malice of the crowd, and the playhouse was announced for opening on the 15th of March.

On a moveable theatre, constructed at one end of the ball-room, the Colonel, in person, opened the entertainments of the night by a prologue. This was followed by a French proverb—then came an act from the "Bedlamite"—another French proverb succeeded—a little more of the "Bedlamite"—the whole dramatic part terminating by an occasional epilogue.

Next in order, was a little music—Mich. Kelly in all his glory; to this, without doubt, a ball succeeded, and a *pic nic* supper was the sum total of the night's enjoyment.

The repast was thus furnished:—The *maître d'hôtel* made out a bill of fare, numbering every dish. Corresponding numbers were then drawn at random by the general subscribers, and each had to supply the stated contents of that dish to which his number corresponded. A mutual assurance with benefit of survivor—incorporated by acts of plays, and secured by the indentures of feasting.

These meetings were continued at intervals throughout this season. Colonel Greville, Captain Caulfield, and Mr. Sowden, generally performing the principal parts in the dramatic exhibition——

"Where every room
Blazed forth with lights and brayed with minstrelsy."

Of this *cacoethes agendi*, Wanley, in his "Wonders of the Little World," has a curious instance: "In the reign of Lysimachus, king of Thrace," says he, "the people were infected by a strange disease. First, a violent and burning fever seized them. Upon the seventh day after, they bled at the nose very copiously, or others of them fell into an exceeding sweat. But a ridiculous affection was left upon their minds, for they all fell to *acting of tragedy*, thundering out iambics, especially the 'Andromeda' of Euripides, and the part of *Perseus* therein, so that the city was full of pallid, attenuated actors. This dotage lasted till the winter, when the sharp frost put an end to it. The secret of the malady was this:—Archelaus, a famous tragedian, had in the summer represented *Andromeda*, and while in the theatre, the people were first seized with fever; and thus the representations of the stage got dominion over their senses."

Richard *Choyce*, (*prænomen idoneum*) Sowden, one of the most rabid in the Pic Nic affair, had been originally brought up to the navy, and was appointed lieutenant before he was twenty years of age; which piece of good luck was augmented by his coming into possession of a handsome fortune at about the same time. This, however, he did not long enjoy, even after his own notion of enjoyment. "Marylebone and the chocolate houses were his undoing;" or, in more modern words, Pall Mall, Soho Square, and its neighbourhood, soon brought

him on his beam ends,—"he was in fact a ruined man before he came to"—the Pic Nic.

Sowden then embraced the stage as a profession; and under the name of Stapleton, made his appearance at the Haymarket Theatre in 1810, in the part of *Dennis Bulgruddery*, but was engaged only for a season. So truly does Addison remark, when he speaks of men mistaking their own qualities:—"Many a lawyer makes but an indifferent figure at the bar, who might have become a very accomplished waterman, and have shone at the Temple Stairs, though he could get no business in the house."

Sowden died a victim to dissipation, at his lodgings in Islington. He was a man of coarse habits and depraved disposition—a kind of minotaur, half man and half brute. Soured by losses and distress, he became ultimately a very pest in society; and acquired a notoriety at Southampton, which the following *decent* hand-bill, circulated by him in that place, will sufficiently prove:—

"TO THE PUBLIC.

"It having been intimated to me that I have materially injured myself in the minds of the inhabitants of this place, by meddling with affairs that do not concern me, and lampooning characters who are known to have powerful friends and connexions in and near this place, (alluding to the disrespectful

introduction of Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in the song of Rooney O'Rogherty,) allow me to observe, for the information of all those of the Kemble faction whom it may concern, that Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, as *public* characters become *public* property; and that I, as a similar *public* character, have a right to make a *public* use of their name in a *public* manner at a *public* place of amusement. I hope this will explain that point, with all due *publicity*, to the *public* partizans of these Theatrical *Publicans* and *sinners*.

" Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons richly deserve what they are known to have, the contempt of every actor in the profession, though all must admire and revere their professional talents and merits. Mrs. Siddons, in particular, deserves the execrations, public and private, of every member of the Southampton theatre, for her shameful conduct during her stay here. But whether the Kembles and their adherents be pleased or not at my conduct, it is to me perfectly immaterial. I have asserted and maintained my rights to do so, and shall continue to do so; and, moreover, as Mrs. Galindo is publishing the Life of Mrs. Siddons, with Anecdotes, Letters, &c., let her apply to me, and I will help her to a few genuine traits of that overgrown mass of pride, hypocrisy, insolence, arrogance, and overbearance, that emblem of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.

"If I have done wrong, I am amenable to the laws of my country, and am willing to abide by them; but, at this juncture, no one seems safe from the tyrannic gripe of the myrmidons of that Bow Street Radamanthus, who administers justice with rigid adherence to impartiality, while he tramples on the privileges of Magna Charta and the Rights of the people; or the eloquent Westminster Lycurgus, who, unblushingly, attempted to corrode the minds of a British jury with the subtle poison of prejudice.

"No Englishman, with these examples before his eyes, can, for a moment, if he truly loves his country, refrain from expressing his abhorrence of those who are the immediate cause of it. And as the stage was originally intended to be the scourge of the follies and vices of the age, I shall always, while I continue the profession of an English actor, endeavour to lash them severely wherever they assume a tangible shape. Meanwhile, I beg leave to assure a just and impartial British public, that they will always find me

"Their most devoted Servant,

"R. STAPLETON."

Captain Caulfield, the next *Bedlamite*, had held a commission in the first regiment of guards, and was so successful in the Pic Nic exhibitions, that Harris invited him to Covent Garden Theatre, where he appeared in 1803 in the character of *Hamlet*.

It was said to have been a very accomplished performance, and this he repeated on several occasions; but Colman's comedy of "*John Bull*" being now produced for the first time, took the lead of all other performances, and the captain was consequently superseded.

The Duke of York was present at Caulfield's first appearance, and finding "he would be an actor," permitted the sale of his commission. At the end of this season, the Captain proceeded to Bath, where he played *Richard III.*, *Sir Giles Overreach*, and some other characters with equal success, and would inevitably have made a gallant stand in his new profession, but for the distinguished part he played in the Court of King's Bench, where he appeared, in 1804, as defendant in a case of Crim. Con., being cast in a new part, namely, that of damages to the amount of 2000*l.*

He now became a prisoner in the custody of the above court, and expired afterwards in lodgings at Hampton in September, 1808.

Caulfield was intended for a man of sense, but having bartered the fee simple of his wisdom for the uncertain tenancy of a wit, he outlived his estate, and eventually died a beggar.

His body was conveyed, not

"As Hook conceals his hero, in a cask!"

but in the case of a piano-forte, to Melina Place,

St. George's Fields, from which spot it was "honourably interred." Jones, the Marshal of the King's Bench Prison, was sentenced to pay 2100*l.* on Caulfield's escape.

An attack of another nature, namely, rheumatic gout, prevented Greville from carrying on these reunions on the following season. A more fashionable situation had now been considered absolutely necessary, and the Hanover Square rooms were partly engaged for future operations; but the Colonel finally agreed on securing Joliffe's old house in Little Argyle-street, which was, in fact, the rise and progress of that establishment, since known as the "Argyle Rooms."

This being arranged on a still more elegant and extensive plan than the former building, the "Pic Nics" resumed their entertainments. These proceeded with great vigour for one or two seasons more, and Greville, by his interest, obtained finally a licence for music, burlettas, and English operas.

Mr. Fuller, member for Sussex, commonly known as the eccentric "Jack Fuller," was a constant attendant on these *soirées*, and on one occasion his amatory temperament had nearly brought him in rough collision with another subscriber, but which was timely prevented by a somewhat ludicrous incident.

During part of this entertainment, Mr. Fuller, who had for a time been ogling a remarkably

handsome woman, sitting at some distance, and attended by an equally "smart young man," began now to express himself in very audible and unequivocal terms of admiration, accompanying the same by a manner so impatient of restraint, as not only to attract the lady and her *cavaliere servante*, but to engage the attention of the whole assembly.

Irritated at length by the continued behaviour of the honourable member, the friend of the lady rose suddenly up, and was in the act of an hostile advance towards the offender, when, unfortunately, he capsized a bottle of hot negus partly over the satin slip of his fair companion, and partly over his own small clothes, which being composed of an article at that time much in vogue, namely, nankeen, produced the most ludicrous and distressing consequences.

The ridiculous is ever irresistible, and though the right was assuredly on the side of the enraged gentleman, yet the laugh was unfortunately against him; and Jack Fuller was consequently brought off the hero of the adventure.

On the 23rd of March, Elliston issued an advertisement, announcing that the Royal Circus would be opened on the Easter Monday ensuing, at his direction; and stated his determination of placing the entertainments under the joint management of persons of the most approved abilities; that he had

embarked in the undertaking, with a view of giving to its exhibitions all the excellence of which they might be capable, within the privilege of his licence.

The whole of the interior was refitted and embellished with good taste; additional private boxes were constructed, and the *ensemble* bore the aspect of complete novelty. The house was opened as announced, on April the 3rd, with a new prelude, entitled, "Albert and Adela; or, the Invisible Avengers," a melo-dramatic spectacle, to which was added a comic pantomime, called "Harlequin's Resource; or, the Witch of Ludlam."

Elliston's engagement at the Lyceum, prevented his appearing at his own theatre, until the 16th of June, when he made his *entrée* as *Captain Macheath*, in a Burletta melodram, in three parts, founded on the "Beggar's Opera"—before which, he spoke an address, whereof we offer a brief extract in allusion to the Horse Circus:—

"At home, then, view me—where, unawed by rule,
The gravest sometimes dare to play the fool;
To cheer the heart,—make every plan their choice,—
And e'en turn singers, *unpossess'd of voice:*
That thought has nearly stopp'd my scanty breath,
While flitting past, appears to frown *Macheath:*
Minims and Crotchets seem to weep and wail,
And like king Richard's ghosts my ears assail:
Richard, who here might bawl in tragic strain,
'A Horse! a Horse!' *nor bawl for one in vain!*

While the poor Captain's strains, less prized by half,
Perchance may only raise a loud *horse-laugh!*
But then, like all *Macheaths*, I feel a hope,
You'll ask from me *no feats upon the rope;*
But, mingling mercy with dramatic laws,
Assuage my doom:—*transport* me, with applause!"

So absolute was the success of this experiment, that the burletta was acted for fifty nights, when an adventure was made of a far more startling character, namely, a grand ballet of action, with music, &c., founded on the "Macbeth" of Shakspeare! This *galimafrée* was produced early in September, and preceded by an *entrée*, composed in the saccharine of rhyme, by the hands of Dr. Busby, and introduced by Elliston himself as *maître d'hôtel.*

It was a composition mixed with all manner of good things, from the conserve of Æschylus to the sweet-meats of Shakspeare. In a literary point of view, the classic doctor appeared to invoke the spirit of his great departed namesake, the pedagogue of Dryden and the flagellation of Prior, by setting in one view the whole inspiration of man, from the days "When music, heavenly maid, was young," to the new score of the Royal Circus.

We rejoice that this valuable original has been preserved, and we hasten to give it to the reader. The narrow licence under which the Circus was permitted to give theatrical entertainments, prohibiting the use of speech, is most curiously alluded

to. The lines of Gay were alone wanting to render this production complete.

Actors ' of late are finely ridden—
A parrot's privilege forbidden !'"

PROLOGUE TO THE BALLET OF MACBETH,

Now performing at the Royal Circus, (1809.)

SPOKEN BY MR. ELLISTON. WRITTEN BY DR. BUSBY.

" WITH nature, and the energies of man,
The reign of poesy and song began ;
The joyful pæan swell'd upon the gale,
And simple pastoral charm'd the silent vale.
But chief the drama's sweet delusion stole
The captive sense, and wrapt the yielding soul.
To *Æschylus*, majestic as severe,
Enlighten'd Athens lent the astonish'd ear ;
Euripides dissolved with softest art,
And lofty *Sophocles* sublimed the heart ;
While *Aristophanes* the poignant lay
Of satire woke, and vice was laugh'd away.
Italia heard and felt the vivid strain,
And arch Thalia spread her frolic reign.
Stern Rome relax'd at *Plautus'* comic fire,
And in chaste *Terence* hail'd *Menander's* lyre.
Then sank the stage, ordain'd in after times
To rise again, and bless more western climes.
Spain *Vega* saw resume the tragic flame,
And *Calderon's* wit insured immortal fame ;
Gallia the gay *Moliere* true humour taught,
And bold *Corneille* the classic furor caught.

Fair Albion, too, the scenic harp essay'd,
And *Jonson's* learned sock her skill display'd.
SHAKSPEARE arose! full orb'd her genius shone,
The ancient stars all blazed again in one.
O'er wild imagination's rich domain
He held a glorious undisputed reign;
The regions of existence all too poor,
He seized her treasures and created more.
Faithful to Nature and the Drama's law,
From this great source our promised scenes we draw;
Macbeth, the regicide Macbeth, portray,
His ruthless consort, and her direful sway.
Though not indulged with fullest powers of speech,
The poet's object we aspire to reach;
The emphatic gesture, eloquence of eye,
Scenes, music, every energy we try,—
To prove we keep our duties full in view,
And what we must not say, resolved to do;
Convinced that you will deem our zeal sincere,
Since more by deeds than words, it will appear."

As manager and lessee of the theatre, Elliston felt he could not with strict propriety advertise his name for a benefit; but with the quick perception of a *Father Joseph*, he attained all the advantages of such a measure, by announcing in the bills, "that on the 27th of September, he would "address the audience" in acknowledgment of the kindness of their patronage, and enter on further explanations respecting his scheme of management.

Never was a word better chosen—it was a *management* worthy a seat on the treasury bench, for

it certainly filled his exchequer, and at the same time kept the people in good humour.

The house was filled, on the night in question, in every part. The boxes were graced by nobility, and the audience was altogether brilliant as numerous. Elliston acted *Macbeth*, and recited Collins' celebrated Ode. Then came the speech—his thanks were abundant, and his promises for the future, liberal. He designated his theatre as a "dramatic asylum, open to the burnt-out actors of Drury," and mingled so many lofty sentiments with the objects of pleasure, that even his neighbour Rowland Hill might have mitigated somewhat of his severity in respect of playhouses, or extended friend Elliston as liberal a boon as to his beloved brother, William Walker, the lecturer.

In conclusion, Elliston took leave to remark that many worthy members of his company would be taking benefits in the course of the ensuing three weeks, on all and every occasion of which, "he himself should appear in two of his favourite characters."

The house then adjourned in perfect good humour.

> "Doubtless the pleasure is as great
> In being cheated as to cheat."

For June, (1809,) there is a minute entered on the Drury Lane theatrical fund books,—that a paragraph be forwarded to the *Morning Chronicle*,

returning Mr. Elliston thanks of the corporation, for the sum of fifty pounds, contributed by him to the service of the decayed brethren.

On the 25th July, a letter was addressed to Elliston, signed by Richard Peake, (Treasurer,) and Charles Ward, (Secretary,) giving him notice, under the direction of the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre, that the Lyceum would open, by their management, about the middle of September, and that they should not propose any abatement, or compromise of salary, &c.

On the following day, in his reply, Elliston inquired whether the Lyceum were to be opened in virtue of the patent, for in that case, he should do all which the terms of his engagement with the patentees had imposed on him; but if any other kind of authority had been assumed, he requested that no dependence should be placed in him.

Sheridan took up the business at issue, and wrote to Elliston, appointing a meeting, which the actor thought proper to decline, unless he had a personal friend present. This was agreed to, and a meeting, which to the surprise of all the world interested in these matters, actually took place, by Sheridan being punctual to his assignation. But nothing, alas! was effected. The appointment was made at the house of a convivial and common friend; all parties were awfully the worse for wine, and nothing was done, except . . . . .

Mr. Thomas Sheridan, after reading the whole correspondence, despatched the following letter:—

"11, South Audley-street, 22nd Sept., 1809.

"SIR,—Having carefully perused the correspondence between you and Mr. Ward, respecting your engagement with the proprietors of the late Drury Lane Theatre; and the whole of what passed at the theatre on Tuesday, in the presence of Mr. Phipps, having been communicated to me, I feel myself called upon, as the person who made the engagement with you, as well as from my situation in the management of the theatre, frankly to expostulate with you on your conduct, before any measures of legal hostility are resorted to, which, however, our duty to our renters and the other claimants on the property, must compel us to resort to, in the case of your refusing to fulfil so clear and positive an agreement, executed, with all form, after the fullest deliberation and discussion.

"I first enclose to you an authenticated copy of the article executed between us on the 10th of March, 1807, and the form and terms of which I must take the liberty of presuming were not in your recollection when you entertained the idea of disputing its validity, and doubting your being strictly bound by its contents. I understand, however, that my father made you a proposition on Tuesday, which was immediately assented

to by you and Mr. Phipps, as a fair and equitable proposal. This proposal was, to refer the question between us to the arbitration of three honourable men, *not implicated in the dispute;* and instead of proceeding in written or verbal altercation, or adopting the still more unpleasant appeal to a court of law, to abide by their decision. This proposition, I am informed, was not adopted in any form, because my father's (in my mind) too liberal suggestion to dispense with your attendance till the time you declared yourself tied to your own concern had expired, namely, the 27th of October, appeared to remove every difficulty from your mind.

"I now, therefore, have only to declare that I here formally repeat to you the proposition above stated, namely, that the question shall be referred to a fair and honourable arbitration; and if that decision shall be that you are not bound in *honour*, *honesty*, and *law*, to fulfil, under all the present circumstances, every part of that article and covenant, (the copy of which I have enclosed to you,) I will, without complaint, release you from every claim, which I am now called upon and bound to assert.

"I think nothing more is necessary to be said, than to express my confidence, that you and Mr. Phipps, as men of honour, cannot refuse this offer. On this consideration, I have to remind you, that your engagement for five years,

of which three remain, at the liberal, if not unprecedented, salary of 28*l.* per week, was acceded to at your own pressing request; that the length of the engagement would enable you to settle, and bring Mrs. Elliston to town, which, upon a short engagement you could not do; nor will I observe at present on the peculiar moment you have chosen for endeavouring to desert us, when you must be conscious there is neither time nor probable means to supply your place, and when I should have hoped that every performer of a liberal mind, reflecting on the liberal treatment they have uniformly experienced, would have been peculiarly anxious to shew some recollection of that treatment, and some reluctance to assist, by their conduct in aggravating, the calamity of the fire which had destroyed our property.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"To R. W. Elliston, Esq."

To this communication from Mr. Thomas Sheridan, Elliston replies on the following day.

"To Thomas Sheridan, Esq.
"Stratford Place, 23rd September, 1809.

"SIR,—I have received your letter of last night, inclosing a copy of my agreement with the proprietors of the late Theatre Royal in Drury Lane.

"Were any evidence necessary to shew that I have not entered into any engagement under which I can be required to perform for the concern at the Lyceum, this document would afford the most decisive proof of that fact. I cannot imagine, on the perusal of this paper, by what mistake of judgment you, or any person, can venture to affirm that I am bound to perform under circumstances so foreign to any in which I stand pledged.

"It is true, that in the conference I had the honour of holding with your father, Mr. Sheridan, on Tuesday last, at which Mr. Phipps was present, I did not object to Mr. Sheridan's suggestion of referring the question of law to the arbitration of lawyers, but it is not true that I gave, nor that Mr. Phipps on my behalf gave, any absolute assent to that measure. On the contrary, I considered, and Mr. Phipps also believed, all that passed, as subject to the result of my further deliberation, and with that result you have been acquainted.

"I would now, however, concur in a reference to arbitrators, as to the point of law, if I could discover anything whereon to arbitrate. It is as clear to me as the sun at noon, that the parties engaged in the

Lyceum concern have not a pretence to my services, excepting on my own choice; and my own choice does not induce me to join them.

"Why, as a mere matter of election, I do not choose to act under the Lyceum scheme, I think it, at present, unnecessary to explain in any detailed form. On a point of inclination, I am not bound to assign my reasons to any man. In the present instance, I am fully prepared to assign reasons, which, I am sure, would be as satisfactory to the world as they are to my own mind. I desire not, however, to occasion offence or vexation, uselessly, to any person; and I will go into no expositions, therefore, unless provocation should render them unavoidable.

"Instead of arbitration, I should earnestly recommend to you to submit the terms of my engagement to some competent legal adviser. I have advised with no lawyer; but I am strongly inclined to believe that no one will be indiscreet enough to urge you to any legal measures against me.

"If such measures, however, be adopted, I am quite ready to meet them; or any imputation which may be attempted to be thrown on the propriety and uprightness of the feelings by which I am actuated.

"On the score of the liberality I have experienced, and the obligation I am presumed to be under on that account, I really have nothing to add

to what I have already written. It is somewhat strange that it should be necessary to force upon me, that which is supposed to be so greatly to my advantage.

"You forbear, you say, to observe on the *time* I have chosen for expressing my determination. Had you not read the correspondence which has passed, I should have imagined that you meant to describe the present moment to be that time. You must surely have perceived that, in the reply I made to the letters I received from Mr. Ward and Mr. Peake, *two months ago*, I expressly desired that no reliance might be placed on my assistance. Any further answer to your remark on this point would be needless. "I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"R. W. ELLISTON."

We must own we do not observe much argument in our friend's reply, nor is it quite so intelligible as we could wish. It reminds us somewhat of Lycophro, a Greek poet, who deemed the highest praise of language was to be obscure. He declared he would hang himself if any were found to understand his poem—"The Prophecy of Cassandra." He, however, had not the slightest occasion to put his threat into execution.

To the above letter, a formal notice was speedily added.

"MR. ELLISTON.—I hereby call upon you, according to your engagement, to perform the part of *Don Felix* in the "Wonder," on Wednesday, the 4th of October next ensuing, and to attend on Monday preceding to rehearse the same at the *Lyceum Theatre*, in the Strand, where his Majesty's servants, forming the Drury Lane company, are for the present to perform. Your obedient servant,

"THOS. SHERIDAN.

"R. W. Elliston, Esq."

Notice upon notice was repeated to the same effect, from manager, prompter, treasurer, and secretary, to all of which Elliston gave reply, that he "would not play at the Lyceum under the arrangement which then existed."

Proceedings were then commenced on the part of Sheridan and others, for breach of contract. In the meantime, however, a long and tedious correspondence on the subject occupied the parties interested. The result was, an abandonment of the action, and the actor left, for the present, master of the field.

In the August of this year, Elliston, but just freed from the troubles of a threatened lawsuit, with the Circus engagement on his hands, and various minor anxieties pressing upon him, purchased the freehold of the Croydon Theatre for 940*l.*, with a further outlay of 100*l.* for scenery, wardrobe, &c. The

expenses of conveyance, &c., were 89*l.*, the whole amounting to 1200*l.* before he got possession.

This speculation was altogether an unfortunate affair. The parties to whom Elliston afterwards let the property became involved, and the landlord found himself on the high road of a similar journey.

CHAPTER XVII.

Dr. Busby—Whimsey of Bannister—An actor of *one* part—Tom Cooke—Anecdotes respecting him—A high note—A note higher—Irish theatricals—Mrs. Billington—A peep through a key-hole—Elliston at Manchester—An Irish benefit, in 1758—An enraged patroness—Memorial to the King—Colonel Taylor—Petition to the House of Commons—Sir T. Turton—Perceval's letter to Elliston—"Third Theatre" petition—A pawnbroker's wife—Tottenham Street Theatre—Privy council—Sheridan—Mrs. T. Sheridan—Expenses of Petition.

At the termination of his first season at the Royal Circus, Elliston entered on a new speculation—one more theatre!—the Manchester, which he opened with an excellent company, on the 4th of December, and an address written by his own laureat, (as he styled him,) Dr. Busby.

Dr. Busby appears to have been no faint shadowing of his forerunners, Elkanan Settle, and Stephen Duck; for although never contesting the palm with a Dryden, or admitted into the boudoir of a Caroline, yet the journals teemed with his poetry, and theatres were redolent of his addresses. He affected the Pindaric rather

than the Epic—the Muse without stays, as the sprightly Tom Brown designates her, rather than the sterner lady in whalebone.

But Elliston and Ellistonian affairs were the poet's principal theme. They contributed to each other's fame—it was a joint policy of immortality; and though the great Edmund Kean might have talked of his secretary, it was reserved for princes and our own hero to move under the irradiation of a Muse.

Elliston's success during his short season at this place was unequivocal; and he played some of his characters (as he frequently did in the country) with far better spirit than before his metropolitan friends.

An incident, humorous in its way, occurred during this brief campaign, for which we by no means vouch, but give only on report. Jack Bannister happening to be at Manchester at the time, though not of the company, (having refused, in fact, to take any engagement,) by way of amusement induced Elliston to advertise him under a feigned name, for some small part in a comedy, announcing at the same time that, between the play and farce, the gentleman would "attempt a scene in the 'Children in the Wood,' after the manner of the celebrated *Mr. John Bannister*, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane."

Bannister acted his part in the play, which being very inconsiderable, he was suffered to pass unnoticed; at the conclusion of which, the curtain

again rose for the imitation. On walks the mimic, in suitable costume, as perfect a *Walter* as ever appeared on the boards of the Haymarket. Bannister here made his bow to some trifling applause, and then entering on the scene, which he had selected for the purpose, went through the whole of it after his best manner.

But the interruptions were many; for scarcely had he spoken three lines, when he was saluted by a most distinct hiss. This was soon followed by a laugh, and presently cries of, "Off, off! trash! —hiss, hiss!"—announced to the poor country *presumer* that he had entirely failed. In fact, he was most completely damned. He now ventured to address the audience—but no—they would not hear him;—they were thoroughly disgusted at the attempt of imitation, which a journal of the Saturday following declared, was the vilest that had ever been offered the public.

So much for the joke. Bannister enjoyed the affair heartily; but the true state of the case being in a very few days generally made known, Elliston found himself in no little disgrace with his Manchester friends. The laugh was so completely turned against them, that Elliston was compelled to get out of the scrape by a most unqualified apology.

On one of the latter nights of his renting the

theatre, Elliston acted *The Three Singles.** The person who was to have played the part of *Renaud*, was taken suddenly ill during the very representation of the piece, when Ward, the leader of the band, laying down his fiddle, volunteered to finish the character; which being received by sounds of applause, he jumped on the stage, and went through the business with admirable art. Owing to his success on this remarkable occasion, Ward determined to hang up his fiddle and turn actor. He made several attempts in other characters, but signally failed in them all. *Renaud*, however, stuck to him like a plaster.

This is another instance of that monophlox, so remarkable in poor Desborough in the early part of this history. Steele, in the "Guardian," has given an amusing account of one William Peer, an actor who took his degree with Betterton, Kynaston, and

* Admirable as Elliston was in these parts, we cannot refrain quoting a passage from the observations of Congreve—in a letter to Dryden—on *personal defects* being mistaken for *humour*—a sentiment in which we so thoroughly concur—he says—"Sure the poet must both be very ill-natured himself, and think his audience so, when he proposes, by shewing a man deformed, or deaf, or blind, (or an idiot,) to give them an agreeable entertainment. In one of your letters to me, you have justly noticed this immoral part of *ridicule* in *Corbaccio's* character, in Jonson's 'Fox;' and here, I must agree with you to blame him, whom otherwise I cannot enough admire, for his great mastery of true humour in comedy."

Harris ; whose memory has been preserved to posterity, by playing only one part. But this single part was such a *point de resistance* in his career, that it has established his solid fame. The character was that of the *actor* in " Hamlet." No one could repeat the lines like him,

> " For us and for our tragedy,
> Here stooping to your clemency,
> We beg your hearing patiently."

" His whole action in life," says the essayist, " depended on his speaking these three lines, which he did better than any man else in the world." Had William Peer played the part of *Hamlet* itself passingly well, he had not, in all probability, been known to that generation which now elevates the lamp of his renown on the tripod of these three lines.

A very similar occurrence to that of Ward, took place at Covent Garden theatre, not many years since. Braham was taken ill during the first act of the " Cabinet," when Woodham, a trumpeter in the orchestra, as an *amicus theatri*, took up the part of *Orlando*, and went through the music and songs with remarkable effect. He also, on this success, turned his attention to the stage, but failed in all future attempts. Providence thus, for a special purpose, seems to give a momentary inspiration.

But perhaps the most remarkable instance of general and permanent talent, is that of Tom Cooke, who was, *par excellence*, a leader in Dublin, and after-

wards principal singer both in that theatre and Drury Lane. Nothing comes amiss to this gentleman in the shape of music, and few things appear to baffle him, in any form.

Thomas, when only eight years old, played a concerto on the violin and violoncello for his father's benefit, and was scarcely nine, when he became a member of the theatrical orchestra, Birmingham. Suett was at that time in the company, who, being a good musician, introduced a song at his benefit, with music of his own composing, and an obligato part for the tenor. On the day this composition was rehearsed, the tenor player declared the music was too difficult, either for him or any one else to attempt, and gave it up. Suett was greatly chagrined at being thus deprived of the opportunity for displaying his talent as a composer, when the leader of the band observed, "I think Tom Cooke could manage it."

"What! that boy!" shrieked Dicky Suett.

"Yes, Sir, that boy!" replied the conductor. Tom then came forward, and taking up the instrument, succeeded so well, that even the malice of professional rivalry, like the tarantula, was charmed, and the whole orchestra responded by a burst of applause. The bills of the night, in advertising this benefit, announced "an obligato accompaniment on the tenor, by Master Cooke, *aged nine years.*"

"This will immortalize you," said one of the actors to little Tom.

"And so it should," answered the boy, "for the announcement is in the words of a tomb-stone."

The attempt was eminently successful, and Tom Cooke, like the great Francis Bacon, found himself famous before he had entered his teens.

In the following winter, Mrs. Billington, being engaged at the Dublin theatre, was rehearsing, one morning, the music of "Love in a Village," in which she tried a song, "Shun, ye fair," newly set by Giordani, for the purpose of displaying the great compass of her voice. In one passage she reached a high note. Young Cooke, who was just then below in the orchestra, in the humour of the moment, imitated this note—or forged it—so exactly, that the attention of Mrs Billington was attracted. She immediately sent for the lad and requested him to repeat the offence, and this he not only did, but aggravated the matter by a still higher flight; to which the siren herself, afterwards attempting, could not attain. Mrs. Billington was indeed surprised, but not out of her generosity, for she was as pleased also as little Tom himself, and rewarding him by a crown, he went away as happy as a king.

Some few years afterwards, Tom Cooke and an ally, one Fulham, entered into a theatrical speculation for opening a house at Carlow, which, though being a county town, had hitherto been destitute of dramatic amusements. Our two adventurers hired a kind of shed for the purpose, at the end of which was a blacksmith's forge, and the whole was pre-

sently converted into a playhouse. A circle of boxes—which was, in fact, a quadrangle of benches —was soon supplied, and a pit tolerably arranged ; but the actors were puzzled a little about a gallery. However, as few things came amiss to the quick perceptions of Tom Cooke, as we have before observed, accommodation was secured in this manner.

Under the roof of the said shed, were open beams or rafters, and these supports were able to contain a certain quantity of persons, with their legs dangling over the pit. So far seemed satisfactory; but in what manner the ladies and gentlemen were to mount to their perch, did not so clearly appear. At last it was settled. There was a small window at the top of the barn, opening into the street, to which, on the outside of the building, a long ladder was placed, at the foot of which stood the money-taker. Thus, all things finally arranged, the opening night arrived. The theatre was filled in every part, for which the ladder experiment was pre-eminently successful, for the humour of the thing brought more ha'pence than the play. The Carlow boys enjoyed it to their very hearts,—the whooping and shrieking, both in ascent and descent, was a complete Irish christening.

The play was "Love in a Village"—*Young Meadows*, by Tom Cooke, and *Justice Woodcock* by Fulham. The company was confined to five men and three women, and the orchestra entirely dispensed

with. As a substitute for the latter, the playhouse violin was hung up on one of the side scenes, and another hired from a neighbouring drinking-shop, suspended on the opposite wing. When Cooke was on the stage, Fulham performed on the public-house instrument, and when Fulham was before the audience, Cooke did wonders on the stock fiddle—for he was first violin, second, tenor, bass—a thorough and complete band!

The afterpiece was "Don Juan," which had been wisely selected for the purpose of bringing the blacksmith's forge into play, and the *Libertine* made his final exit amidst a shower of fire, which had demanded no rehearsal.

The later history of Mr. Cooke is pretty generally known to all those who have felt any interest in theatrical concerns during the last twenty years; and more intimately by those whose taste may have led them to appreciate the best music. Fortunately for that science, and most fortunately for an extensive circle of private friends, Mr. Cooke is still in the vigour of his talent, which is associated with the worth of amiable qualities and a lively fancy—for it is not too much to say, Mr. Cooke is one of the most agreeable companions that society might be desirous of possessing.

Of Mrs. Billington there is an anecdote not to be found in the "Biographical Dictionary of Music." Soon after Miss Weichsell (which was her maiden

name) had married Mr. Billington, she was engaged at the Dublin Theatre. Mrs. Daly, the manager's wife, had for some time entertained troublesome suspicions, that her husband had discovered greater happiness in the society of the accomplished vocalist, than was seemly for an honest man and the father of a family. In fact, she determined to watch the parties narrowly; and on one eventful evening, planting herself in a crouching position, just under the lock of the manager's dressing-room in the theatre, she testified, through the key-hole, all that her worst fears had whispered her. Resolving not to disturb the harmonious concert within, as some enraged women would have done, Mrs. Daly tripped nimbly off for the purpose of bringing Mr. Billington himself, to partake the disclosures of the key-hole, and share in the entertainment.

Having, therefore, amused themselves by alternate bobs at the kaleidoscopic combinations within, for some few minutes, Mr. B. (with as much prudence as Mrs. D.) conducted himself with equal forbearance, looking for better satisfaction than any noisy heroism, or trash about injured honour, by calling up a score of scene-shifters and supernumeraries to have a peep also.

Mr. Billington, having thus got his legal witnesses together, (for he appears to have had some knowledge of the law of evidence,) was not long

before he commenced his action—process for process—when the lady protested that, if the dressing-room affair ever found its way into any other court, she would never again appear on the Dublin stage. This resolution was in every way masterly for the case of the defendant, for Mr. Daly also as positively declared that, if she refused performing, he would immediately proceed against her husband for the forfeiture of 500*l*, according to her professional agreement with him, to which Mr. Billington had also been a party.

The ill-starred plaintiff hereupon found himself in a cleft stick. Should his wife refuse to fulfil her engagements, 500*l*. would certainly stand against him; and, as any damages he might have fondly anticipated from a jury would not, in all probability, be very—very large, he abandoned the legal form of attack altogether.

Mr. Billington now made up his mind to call his antagonist to a field of honour; but "No," replied the tactical manager—"this will never do. Had you determined on this course in the first instance, I should have been bound to permit you to run me through the body; but as a gentleman and a musician, you ought to know, that a court of honour will never consent to play second fiddle to a court of law." And thus ended the affair.

Let us, however, append the Song to the Songster:—

"Not Sappho, nor Mara, nor deified Banti,
Nor the Tuscan dark beauty, renown'd Allegranti,
Spell-circled Cumæan, nor minstrel divine,
Have witch'ries so loved or so potent as thine.
Thine art is magic, magic are thine eyes,
The babbler ponders, and the gazer dies;
Touch'd by the strain, would Bacchus cease to sip,
And tear the goblet from his ruby lip;
His tigers foam no more, whom fury fired,
And god and savage blend, by thee inspired."

At the conclusion of the Manchester season, Elliston did not take a "benefit," but he procured a tantamount advantage by the more elegant means of a special "bespeak."

Mr. Clowes was, this year, sheriff for the county, under whose patronage a distinguished auditory graced the closing efforts of our hero in this town, when the manager made a speech, remarkable for all topics which could possibly carry with them the least interest, except the very purpose which brought him before the company. He entered into a lengthy detail of his difference with Sheridan, and made complimentary allusions to the high-sheriff for Lancashire. Something about Garrick he said, and a good deal respecting manufacturing distress; and having occupied about twenty minutes in this pantological harangue, to the satisfaction of all parties, of which he himself was assuredly one, he bowed and retired. The receipts on the sheriff's night were considerable.

In the time of Sheridan, the actor, (father of Richard Brinsley,) a fashion prevailed amongst the *elegantes* of Dublin, of benefiting distinguished players, by the lady patroness attending in person early at the entrance of her box at the theatre, and receiving her company, as though in her own drawing-room, who paid their respects to her, before taking their places in the dress-circle. It was a fashion of the day, and frequent jealousies were excited amongst the female leaders to *ton*, resplecting the *éclat* of their appropriate nights.

In the year 1758 a certain *parvenue* being ambitious of trying her strength amongst the higher grades, was rash enough to take a patronizing lead for the benefit of some actor. She issued her cards accordingly, through the fashionable circles, for a special night, and took her place early in the theatre, for the general reception. To her great mortification, however, and no less to that of the poor *beneficier*, her *levée* had but a gloomy appearance. Seated in solitary grandeur at the ostiary of her box, she had little interruption to her own meditations, for no company arrived. Her nervous state was anything but delectable. She was ready to expire with vexation, when the box-keeper advancing with rather an aspect of encouragement, observed,

"Your ladyship's gallery is excellent!—your ladyship's gallery looks charming!"—In the course of five minutes more, the man returned, with

still brighter looks, — "your ladyship's pit improves—we don't despair of your ladyship's pit," —but alas! in the boxes, not a soul!

By this time, the curtain was up for the comedy; —maddened by rage, the lady now took her seat on her crimson chair of a side box, with the agreeable prospect of a whole dress circle perfectly unoccupied—some twenty persons in the pit—but "her ladyship's gallery excellent!" Her state was positively volcanic; at the close of the first act, the box-keeper again advanced, observing,

"Your ladyship's gallery is tremendous—positively overwhelming—we can't contain them."

"Send them here!" ejaculated the lady, in a tone of fury—"send them here, if there are five hundred, and let the expenses be mine." The "order" was instantly obeyed, and a body of ragamuffins were admitted, which, if quantity did ever supply the defection of quality, here was full satisfaction. The house was now a bumper—the benefit a good one—the lady patroness satisfied all demands, but withdrew from this hour as a leader of fashion.

On the 17th of November, 1809, Elliston enclosed to the Lord Chamberlain, a copy of a Memorial, addressed to the king, with which he had attended on the day previous at Windsor, and which Colonel Taylor had undertaken should be presented to his Majesty.

The substance of the Memorial was as follows :—

"That his Majesty's Memorialist had ever been honoured by public favour and encouragement, and that in consequence of the destruction of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, he had been deprived of the opportunity of performing under the Patent, and other privileges attached to that Theatre.

"That Drury Lane Theatre could not be re-erected for a considerable time. That his Majesty's Memorialist had, in concert with Colonel Greville, been in treaty for the possession of the Pantheon, in Oxford-street, with the view of carrying into operation the privileges of a licence which the Lord Chamberlain had granted to Colonel Greville, under which licence *recitativo* must be substituted for dramatic dialogue.

"That the intellectual community would be benefited by an extension of licence for the regular drama, and that his Majesty's Memorialist humbly prayed, his Majesty would be pleased to authorize such an extension to the licence already granted to Colonel Greville, in which the present Memorialist was included."

After a few days, Elliston received the annexed communication.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor presents his compliments to Mr. Elliston, and has had the honour of presenting his Memorial to the king, and of re-

ceiving his Majesty's commands to acquaint him, that as the law now stands, his Majesty cannot notice any representation connected with the establishment of another theatre.

"Windsor."

Elliston being at Bath at this time, his confidential agent writes to him:—

"Colonel Taylor's note gives no assent; but I think, upon the whole, it is not so unfavourable. It does not in the slightest degree discourage any application to parliament. At all events, it secures to you this, that no one, *by application to the king*, can have a preference to you. The assertion as to the state of the law is not quite correct, because, in the City of Westminster, and in the actual place of the king's residence, the royal power to create theatrical establishments is, I am convinced, indisputable."

With an elastic bound, Elliston now sprang from the surface of opposition. Difficulties never clouded the prospect of his devices, and like the sportsman in the field, his chief pleasure was in pursuit.

The success of his first season at the Circus now induced him to attempt an enlargement of its privileges. Baffled in his attempt by Memorial to the king, on planting the drama within the walls of the Pantheon, he now by Petition to parliament sought

to secure it within his own establishment; and on the 5th of March (1810) Sir Thomas Turton presented the following to the House of Commons:—

"6th February, 1810.

"To the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

"The humble Petition of Robert William Elliston, of Stratford Place, in the County of Middlesex, Comedian,

"SHEWETH,—

"That your Petitioner has rented for a term of years the Theatre in St. George's Fields, in the County of Surrey, commonly called 'The Royal Circus.'

"That such Theatre is at present licensed by the Magistrates of the County of Surrey, in virtue of the Act of the twenty-fifth of His Majesty King George the Second.

"That, in addition to a very high rent, which your Petitioner pays for such Theatre, he has adventured considerable sums in such preparations and arrangements as might render the performances therein conducted, worthy of public approbation, exceeding in the whole upwards of six thousand pounds.

"That your Petitioner is now on the point of expending a large further sum, in order to increase

and extend the accommodations of the said Theatre, for the public use.

"That under the licence by which the Performances in the said Theatre are at present authorized, your Petitioner has it not in his power to present any Entertainment therein in which Dialogue can be used, excepting with an accompaniment of Music throughout.

"That your Petitioner humbly conceives, that no advantage can be produced to the community, nor to the interests of any existing property, by the use of this restriction.—That, on the contrary, such restriction has a tendency to abridge the utility of the performances commonly exhibited in the Theatres, acting under such aforesaid licence—to harass and incommode the conduct of such performances—and to prolong the existence of a mode of representation founded on a false and vicious taste.

"Your Petitioner, therefore, humbly prays that this Honourable House will be pleased to grant leave, that a Bill be brought in to enable your Petioner to exhibit and perform in the said Theatre, the Royal Circus, all such entertainments of music and action as are commonly called Pantomimes and Ballets, together with Operatic or Musical Pieces, accompanied with *Dialogue*, in the ordinary mode of dramatic representation—subject, at all times, to the restraint and control of the Right

Honourable the Lord Chamberlain of his Majesty's household, in conformity to the laws by which Theatres possessing more extensive privileges are regulated.

"And your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

"ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON."

An alteration was suggested in the nature of the petition, for exempting the proprietor of the Royal Circus, from certain penalties under the law for regulating dramatic exhibitions. To this, Sir Thomas Turton, unadvisedly, (as Elliston thought,) consented, and thus changed the power to be granted from an *enabling act*, to one of *exemption*. This scarcely could have hoped for a successful issue—exempting an individual from penalties incurred by breach of an existing law, could not be sanctioned by the House of Commons.

On the same month, a long explanatory statement was sent on the part of Elliston to Mr. Perceval and Mr. Ryder, stating further grounds for applying to parliament for the above privilege. To this a reply was forwarded on the following day:

"Downing Street, 11th March, 1810.

"Mr. Perceval presents his compliments to Mr. Elliston, and thanks him for the trouble he has taken in explaining to him the grounds of his

application to parliament. Mr. Perceval, upon reference to the best means of information he could obtain, is satisfied that Mr. Elliston's request cannot be granted, except upon a ground which would go to alter the whole principle upon which theatrical entertainments are at present regulated within the metropolis, and twenty miles round it."

To any one but Elliston, this would have been conclusive, but with him it was far otherwise. The rebuff only occasioned another bound, and the harder the stroke, the more elevated was his flight. To oppose the very minister of the crown, even his attorney—who could squeeze a client like the last lemon—considered rash and hopeless; but again Elliston assailed the Treasury bench. Letter after letter—and with Downing Street in one pocket, and Drury Lane in the other—it would be difficult to conceive a more supreme point of human elevation—except, indeed, the Cham of Tartary, who, having taken his repast, permits the sovereigns of the earth to sit down to dinner.

Though advising his client to give up petitioning parliament himself, the attorney by no means recommended Elliston remaining silent, on the question of a third Theatre Bill, for which application was then making—for, although Elliston could consistently urge nothing against the merits of the case itself, (having employed them in his own plea,)

yet by interfering he might thereby keep alive what he called his claims, in the minds of those most potential.

Elliston felt, moreover, that his injuries were not confined to a mere rejection of his parliamentary petition, but that he was suffering encroachment on his own territorial possessions. In addition to the Olympic and Sans Pareil licences, another had been recently granted for a theatre in Tottenham Court Road. This licence had been given to one Paul, a retired pawnbroker, who having closed his duplicate doors in High St. Marylebone, and sold off all his unredeemed pledges, had a fancy for turning theatrical manager. This hallucination had been engendered under the hot vertical sun of his wife's vanity, who, being firmly persuaded she possessed the combined talents of Siddons and Mara, thought that, by a concentration of the same in burlettas and recitative pieces, she could multiply her husband's gains by far more than the paltry cent. per cent. he had been accustomed to, and raise herself to the distinction of the frail companion to some child of fashion.

Paul, vain of his wife's attraction, though setting but a pawnbroker's value on her favours, listened to these dazzling proposals, and secured the premises in question—namely, the King's Concert Rooms in Tottenham Street—the same which, a few years be-

fore, had been occupied by the celebrated Pic-Nics, and converted them into a theatre.

This place, the new proprietor opened on Easter Monday, 1810, with a burletta founded on "Love in a Village," which was in fact the opera itself, scene for scene, and word for word, with the interruption only of a discordant note occasionally, on the pianoforte. An old coat with fresh buttons would have been a less piece of imposture.

Mrs. Paul was of course the *Rosetta*, and a coarse piece of business it was; for though certainly a fine woman, she was far more fitted for a brigand's mistress than a pastoral maiden; and though she most miserably failed in "Love in a Village," yet she succeeded to admiration in Love in Bloomsbury. Poor Paul, from a man of substance, was in a short time reduced to a slender estate. The pawnbroker himself was compelled to raise supplies by a mortgage of his effects, and standing now on the other side of the very counter were he was once dictator, had perfect leisure to contemplate his folly. Paul became bankrupt,—*Rosetta* was taken in pledge by a certain stockbroker, residing at Clapham,—and the doors of Tottenham Street were for the first time closed, under a commission.

Petitions were now laid before the Privy Council, in respect of a Third Theatre. The following account of the proceedings was transmitted to Elliston:—

"Sheridan sat at the council board, whose petition came on after yours. There was one also from the wife of Tom Sheridan. (Thomas Sheridan was at this time in Spain, in a declining state of health.) All the petitions were in the hands of counsel, excepting Greville's, yours, Sheridan's, and that of Mrs. Thomas Sheridan. Sheridan's was very declamatory, and certainly produced an effect; but, I think, yours was as persuasive as any. Lord Harrowby perused it with evident attention. The Attorney-General,* who was officially present, gave strong indications of dislike and hostility to a third theatre, and shook his head wondrously like Lord Burleigh, or as you might have fancied the *Lord Mayor* in 'Richard the Third.'

"To your petition Sheridan listened with more gravity than he is accustomed to exhibit. Graham was present, and observed, 'you were a pretty fellow to petition the king, after violating the laws at your *Circus;* and that if you were brought before him, he should deem the utmost penalty under the Vagrant Act applicable to your case.' The Justice was in a fury. Much was said about the illegality of your Circus Macbeth, when Sheridan slily observed, the greatest violation was to the bard, in *your* attempting the impersonation! Adam attended on behalf of Drury Lane Theatre — he was quite didactic and pathetic."

* Sir V. Gibbs.

The expenses attending Elliston's petition to the House of Commons, were 101*l.*, and 31*l.* before the Privy Council.

At the commencement of this year Lewis retired from the stage. "All was frolic, fun, and humour," observed a journal at the time. He was a whimsical, eccentric, and at the same time an elegant actor. His great quality, however, was his buoyant, exuberant spirits. In light dramas he might have excelled Elliston; but he wanted his replete, rich style for leading comedy.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane.

Adelaide Street, Dec. 1843.

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